

6 tips

for speaking with someone who stutters

Stuttering may look like a problem that can be easily solved with simple advice, but for many adults, it can be a chronic life-long disorder. Here are some ways that you, the listener, can help.

1 Don't make remarks like: "Slow down," "Take a breath," or "Relax." Such simplistic advice can be felt as demeaning and is not helpful.

2 Let the person know by your manner that you are listening to what he or she says — not how they say it.

3 Maintain natural eye contact and wait patiently and naturally until the person is finished.

4 You may be tempted to finish sentences or fill in words. Try not to do so.

5 Be aware that those who stutter usually have more trouble controlling their speech on the telephone. Please be patient in this situation. If you pick up the phone and hear nothing, be sure it is not a person who stutters trying to start the conversation before you hang up.

6 Speak in an unhurried way — but not so slowly as to sound unnatural. This promotes good communication with everyone.



myths about stuttering

Myth: People who stutter are not smart.

Reality: There is no link whatsoever between stuttering and intelligence.

Myth: Nervousness causes stuttering.

Reality: Nervousness does not cause stuttering. Nor should we assume that people who stutter are prone to be nervous, fearful, anxious, or shy. They have the same full range of personality traits as those who do not stutter.

Myth: Stuttering can be "caught" through imitation or by hearing another person stutter.

Reality: You can't "catch" stuttering. No one knows the exact causes of stuttering, but recent research indicates that family history (genetics), neuromuscular development, and the child's environment, including family dynamics, all play a role in the onset of stuttering.

Myth: It helps to tell a person to "take a deep breath before talking," or "think about what you want to say first."

Reality: This advice only makes a person more self-conscious, making the stuttering worse. More helpful responses include listening patiently and modeling slow and clear speech yourself.

Myth: Stress causes stuttering.

Reality: As mentioned above, many complex factors are involved. Stress is not the cause, but it certainly can aggravate stuttering.

answers

for

employers



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introduction

The Stuttering Foundation assembled this guide to answer some common questions about stuttering for employers and to provide additional resources for people who stutter and their colleagues in the workplace.

basic facts

- Over 70 million people worldwide stutter — more than one adult in a hundred. Stuttering affects 3 to 4 times as many men as women.
- There is a very good chance that every organization employs or will employ people who stutter.
- Stuttering is a chronic communication disorder that interferes with a person's ability to speak fluently. While the cause of stuttering is not known, there is evidence that the disorder has strong genetic and neurological components.
- People who stutter perform successfully in the widest range of occupations—from teacher to medical doctor and from executive to salesperson.
- Many men and women who stutter have gone on to have highly successful careers in their chosen fields.

eliminating stereotypes about stuttering

- ✓ For people who stutter, a job interview is perhaps the single most difficult speaking situation they will ever encounter and is not indicative of how they will speak on the job. It is important to consider the actual job requirements and conditions.
- ✓ People who stutter are as intelligent and well-adjusted as those who don't.
- ✓ Don't assume that people who stutter are prone to be nervous, anxious, fearful, or shy. While stuttering behaviors may sometimes resemble the behaviors of those who experience these emotions, people who stutter have the same full range of personality traits as those who do not.
- ✓ Stuttering is not the result of emotional conflict or fearfulness.
- ✓ People who stutter often have excellent communications skills. They should not be seen as deficient at verbal communication. Some are very often qualified for and interested in positions requiring them to deal with members of the public on a daily basis.
- ✓ People who stutter have the same ambitions and goals for advancement as non-stutterers. To an extent consistent with their abilities, they should be offered leadership opportunities and paths for promotion within an organization.
- ✓ Stuttering varies widely in different people and varies in the same person over different times and places. People who stutter often have "good" and "bad" days with their speech.

- ✓ Some people who stutter less severely may not acknowledge it publicly for fear of losing their jobs or being denied promotions. By feeling forced to keep their condition a secret, they place themselves under enormous stress. This can impact their own job performance as well as that of their colleagues.

people who stutter on the job: helpful strategies

- The best way to approach an employee's stuttering is through honest communication. By refraining from making assumptions about the person's job-related abilities and skills, both the employee and employer can effectively achieve their goals.
- Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) can be helpful by maintaining information on stuttering so that employees with questions—for themselves or their children—can be referred to the appropriate professionals.

responsibilities of people who stutter

- The Stuttering Foundation encourages people who stutter to take an active approach toward their stuttering, including professional therapy and self-therapy. It offers a nationwide referral list of specialists in stuttering and information on obtaining insurance coverage. Self-therapy materials are available free of charge online at StutteringHelp.org or call (800) 992-9392.
- People who stutter should be honest and open with their employers about their speaking abilities and the areas in which they feel they can perform effectively.