

## Children Who Stutter – Beyond “Speech Tools”:

A Multidimensional Approach  
to A Complex Disorder  
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### Disclosures

- I am here to talk primarily about treating school-age & teenage children who stutter (CWS)
- Much does *not* apply to preschool CWS.
- Financial disclosures: None.
- Non-financial disclosures: National Stuttering Association (member); Teens Who Stutter, Raleigh chapter (volunteer); FRIENDS (active)
- Most of the information presented here comes from my professional experience working with people who stutter (one aspect of EBP), experts in the field, and my own journey toward recovery from stuttering.

### Purpose

- To suggest a comprehensive approach to “Speech Tools” (& beyond) that helps CWS overcome the burden & adverse effects of stuttering

### Objectives

- *Identify* the usual contents of a Speech (Fluency) Tool Box
- *Identify* some shortcomings of a Speech (Fluency) Tool approach
- *Tell* how to “sharpen” (refine) and add Speech Tools we use to reduce of motor impairment in stuttering
- *Tell* some Speech Tools to pack & other approaches to use to address the “whole disorder” - Motor, Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive

### The nature of stuttering

- Fluency problems are multifactorial.
- Most researchers believe stuttering is a complex, multidimensional disorder that includes *motor, genetic, temperament, & environmental factors*

### The nature of stuttering



- Brain research suggests changes to the brain can be made at any age – neuroplasticity.
- The ability to makes changes in speech production varies from child to child
- *But ...* past the preschool years – ages 2, 3, 4 – full recovery from stuttering for most children is **unlikely**.

## The nature of stuttering

- Past a certain age, stuttering appears neurologically “*built-in*”
- It is not a behavioral problem or habit that can be “*fixed*.”

## What is stuttering?

- Standard definitions take a *motor*-based approach:
  - **Stuttering:** A speech disorder in which the flow of speech is disrupted by involuntary repetitions and prolongations of sounds, syllables, words or phrases as well as involuntary silent pauses or blocks in which the person who stutters is unable to produce sounds. (World Health Organization)

## What is stuttering in schools?

- N.C. Guidelines steer us toward a focus on *fluency*:
  - A “**fluency impairment**” is
    - ... “a disruption in the normal, rhythmic flow of speech that interferes with communication. The disorder may include, but not be limited to, **frequency** of dysfluencies, **duration** of dysfluencies, struggle and avoidance characteristics, and **types** of dysfluencies (repetition—phrases, whole words, syllables, and phonemes; prolongations; and blocks).” (N.C. Procedures Governing Programs and Services for Children with Disabilities, 2004)

## What is stuttering in schools?

A child is eligible when:

- **Frequency** and/or **durational** measurements of dysfluencies in one or more settings:
  - more than 2% atypical dysfluencies, with or without the presence of struggle behaviors;
  - more than 5% typical dysfluencies, with or without the presence of struggle behaviors, covert stuttering behaviors or coping mechanisms, or with the presence of one or more risk factors.
- **Rate** of speech at least  $\pm 1.5$  standard deviations from the mean.
- **Speech naturalness** outside the normal range of 3.0 for children and 2.12-2.39 for adolescents/adults on a 9-point naturalness rating scale. (N.C. Guidelines, 2004)

## The guidelines make me Stutter-Free!



- **Speech sample:** 98.6% fluent (1.4% SS) in an IEP meeting, a high-demand situation.
- **Not >2% SS?** I don't stutter, right?
- I'm cured! ☺

## The guidelines make me Stutter-Free!



*But ...*

- I exert a considerable amount of **mental & emotional** energy planning & executing speech & managing reactions to anxiety & stuttering, while reducing avoidance & pursuing valued communication goals.
- *And I still have the occasional epic block*
- **Darn. I do stutter!**

## What is stuttering?

- Stuttering is more than a *speech* disorder.
- Stuttering can adversely affect **every** aspect of a person's life: *academically, socially, vocationally.*
- "Stuttering is more than just stuttering"  
(Reardon Reeves & Yaruss, 2013)
- **This is the part of stuttering that can be confusing for many SLP's.**

## Clearing up the confusion

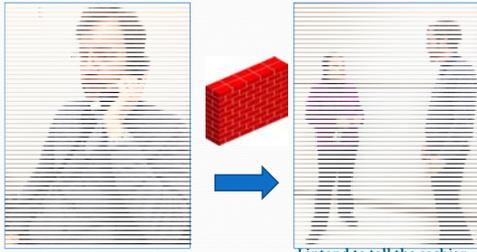
- To understand stuttering, we must also understand:
- Stuttering often involves the experience of **loss of control**
- The experience of **loss of control** leads to **reactions**
- **Reactions** play an important role in why stuttering can be such a burden



## 1. The feeling of loss of control

- **Loss of control:** *It's the feeling that you know what to say, but for some reason, you just can't make yourself say it.* (Yaruss, 2014)
- When you experience *loss of control*
  - You may be disfluent
  - But you may not

## Stuttering can occur in the absence of observable features (Smith, 1999)



I order take-out for "Rob Dellinger."

I intend to tell the cashier my first & last name but say "Rob" to avoid anticipated loss of control

## "Stuttering is More Than Just Stuttering"

Moving from "when a stutterer doesn't speak, he or she doesn't stutter!" (Silverman, 2004)

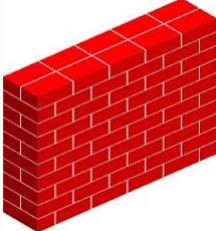


to "when a stutterer stutters, he or she may choose not to speak." (Jackson, Quesal, & Yaruss, 2012)

- Avoiding my name is still stuttering

## Loss of control

- Stuttering is like a **Brick Wall** (Parry)



## 2. The role of reactions

- The link between the *motor* impairment and the way it *adversely affects* a person's life is mediated by **reactions**:
- ABC's of Stuttering**
  - Affective:** Feelings, attitudes, fear/panic
  - Behavioral:** Actions (avoidance, tension, struggle)
  - Cognitive:** Thoughts, beliefs, self-evaluation, judgments

(Yaruss, 2012)

## Role of Reactions - interplay

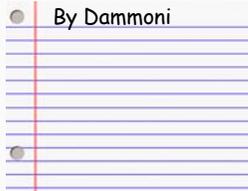
**C** → **A** → **B** →  
 I think I'll stutter > I panic > I struggle >

**B** → **A** → **C** →  
 The more struggle > the more panic > "I can't say it" >

**C** → **A** → **B**  
 The more I think I can't say it > the more panic >  
 > & the more struggle & likelihood I'll avoid the word/situation in the future

## Dammoni's reaction ...

"Mr. Dellinger, can I read you my story? ...  
 "By D ... .. [B]  
 "D ... .. [B]  
 "M ... .. [C, B]  
 (Face turns red) [A]  
 "I can't say it. ...." [C]  
 (He gives up). [B]



## Reuben's reaction

- Saying my name



## Role of reactions

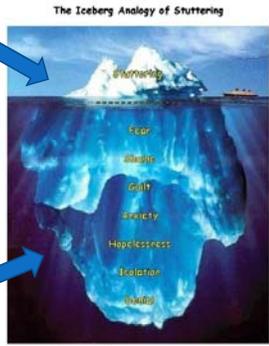
- Stuttering is like a *house on fire* (Quesal)



## "Stuttering is more than just stuttering"

**Motor** →

**ABC's** →



www.russkids.com/iceberg

### What about this for a definition?

- Stuttering is a neurobiological lack of integration of the underlying processes of planning and producing language and speech that, upon verbal execution, can lead to interruptions in the acoustic speech signal (e.g., blocks, part-word repetitions, disfluencies) and physical struggle (e.g., tension). These surface behaviors may not be present, however, when the speaker exhibits **communicative avoidance** (e.g., circumlocutions, fillers) ...

### What about this definition?

- ... The underlying features may lead to surface behaviors, **as well as** emotional and cognitive reactions. Depending on the individual, these may result in significant difficulties in communication and an adverse impact on the speaker's quality of life. **The physical symptoms, emotional and cognitive reactions, and impact on the speaker's life all comprise the disorder of stuttering.**  
(Jackson, Quesal, & Yaruss, 2012)

### Implications

- What does this mean for SLPs?
- Therapy involves more than just treating the "stuttering," right?
  - Physical symptoms *and*
  - Emotional and cognitive (& behavioral) reactions
  - Adverse effects on the speaker's life
- Should we just "work on fluency and hope for the best?"
- Or "work on fluency ... **and** all the rest?" (Yaruss, 2014)

### Complicating factors

- Many SLP's feel inadequately trained and not well prepared to meet the needs of CWS  
(Yaruss & Reeves)



### Complicating factors

- Stuttering ranks *lowest* in rankings of disorders that clinicians prefer to treat (!)

### Complicating factors

- Often, clinicians are trained to focus their treatment solely on speech **fluency** ... disregarding the "big picture" – the child as a whole, not just speech  
(Yaruss & Reeves)



### Complicating factors

- Even when there's a sense that *"stuttering is more than just stuttering"*
  - & involves more than just disfluent speech behavior ...
- In schools, *"the clock is always ticking"*



### Complicating factors

- **Nature of school practice:**
  - High workloads, caseloads
  - Few CWS on the roster
  - The "therapy assembly line"
  - Limited access to parents & teachers
  - Inadequate planning time



### Why talk about Speech Tools?

- I've worked in the Wake County Public School System for 15 years
- I have often been asked to consult on cases of CWS across the county (& state)
- Speech (Fluency) Tools are what "everybody" uses!
- We're (mostly) *working on fluency & hoping for the best*



### Unpacking the Speech Tool Box

- What's inside?
  - Tools to improve
    - Initiation of speech
    - Continuation of speech
    - Overall management of speaking



### Unpacking the Speech Tool Box

- Tools to initiate speech:
  - **Easy onset** (phonation)
  - **Light contact** (articulation)- move the articulators slowly and touch gently; add friction to stops
  - **Smooth Start** (articulation + phonation)
  - **Airflow**



### Unpacking the Speech Tool Box

- Tools to continue speech:
  - **Continuous Phonation**
  - **Smooth Movements** (articulation)
  - **"Smooth, Easy Speech"**



## Unpacking the Speech Tool Box

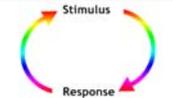
- Tools to manage overall act of communication:
  - **Slowing speech rate**
    - E.g., “Turtle speech” with preschoolers
  - **Pause & talk**



## Speech Tools that aren't really “tools” (for the CWS)



- Response Contingencies
  - In behavioral terms, *reward* fluency and *punish* stuttering
  - Acknowledge/praise stutter-free speech
  - Acknowledge stuttering, request self-correction
    - E.g., Lidcombe Program
  - Green speech/red speech activities
  - “Time-out” for stuttering, start again



## Speech Tools that aren't really “Speech” Tools

- Physical Cues (Timing & Pacing)
  - Tapping finger, hand, foot
  - Moving head forward
  - Moving hand



## In Summary: Unpacking the Tool Box ... here's what's inside

Speech Tools for CWS to use:

- Full breath/airflow
- **Light contact**
- **Easy Onset**
- **Smooth Start (Slide)**
- **Continuous vocalization**
- **Smooth Easy Speech**



(Notice how they are all *fluency* tools)

## In Summary: Unpacking the Tool Box

Speech Tools for SLP's to use:

- Response Contingencies

Non-“Speech” Tools

- Physical cues, e.g., foot/let tapping



(Notice how they are all *fluency* tools, too)

## Unpacking the Tool Box

- Are the Speech Tools doing the job? Let's see.



### You've already met me, but ...



- Allow me to re-introduce myself.
- Hello, my name is Rob Dellinger, and I am a person who stutters.
- I'll be talking with you for almost two hours. Chances are, I'm going to stutter (& already have!)
- I'm feeling pretty nervous about that, so I'll need you to help me use my tools

### How you can "help"

- When I stutter, remind me to take a deep breath in, then say the word on a little breath of air.
- ... ... That will remind me I need air for talking.

*(But sometimes I run out of breath.)*



### How you can "help"

- Every time I stutter, be sure to flash me a "slide" signal. 
- That will remind me to use my *Smooth Start* so I don't stutter on the first word.
- *(But that doesn't sound like me. And are you really listening?)*

### How you can "help"

- Flash a **green** card every time I am fluent. That will remind me that fluency is good and I should speak fluently.



### How you can "help"

- Flash a **red** card every time I stutter. That will remind me that stuttering is bad, and I should stop.



*(Actually, I already know.)*

### How you can "help"



- Every time I stutter, correct me.
- Say, "I noticed you had a little bump there. Go back & say it again, using your Smooth, Easy Speech."

*(Did you even hear what I had to say?)*

### How you can “help”

- When I start to talk to fast, remind me to use my “Turtle Speech.”
- Thhaaat wwwwaaaay I’ll speak more fluently.

(But who talks like that??)



### How you can “help”

- When I stutter, signal me to *tap-tap-tap* my finger.
- That will help me co-or-di-nate ar-ti-cu-la-tion & pho-na-tion

(I’m never gonna use that.)



### How Tools can “help”



- When my *Speech Tools* don’t work in class, scratch your head & wonder why I’m choosing not to use them.
- Say, “You have to **use** the tools for them to work.”

(But I tried!)

### How you can “help”



- And if all else fails ... suggest an *accommodation*.
- I could videotape this presentation when I’m fluent, so everybody could watch it online & never have to hear me stutter!

(Because you don’t ever want to hear me stutter, right?)

### How you can “help”



- By all means, when I’m fluent, give me a sticker.
- But not if I stutter.

(If I stutter, I don’t deserve one.)

### How am I doing so far?

- *Really, not so bad!*
- I’m stuttering some, but I’m ...
- **Assertive:**
  - Speaking for myself
  - Not avoiding
- **Confident** (behaviors): *nervous, hands shaking*, but ...
  - Making eye contact
  - Using an appropriate volume of voice
  - Using body language



## How am I doing?



- **Effective:**
  - Efficient rate of information flow
  - Mostly fluent
  - Increased ease & reduced effort when stuttering
  - Adequate language formulation, articulation, voice & pragmatics
- **Proactive**
  - I planned & practiced this presentation with a particular audience in mind

## How am I doing?



- Last but not least ...
- **Courage:**
  - I am nervous, but I am *doing it anyway!*
  - I am *willing* to experience anxiety and fear the service of a *valued outcome*:
    - I want to help my colleagues help children who stutter.
- Believe it or not... I stutter, but I'm being a pretty **effective communicator**.

## So how's your "help" helping?

- Well ...
- I thought I was doing pretty well. But I'm not.
- The message is clear. **Fluency is good, stuttering is bad.**
- If I only tried harder, I'd do better. I must want to stutter.
- Since I stutter sometimes, **I must be bad.** Right?

## How's your "help" helping?

- I'm feeling ... **guilt**. *Why couldn't I use my Smooth Easy Speech ALL the time?*
- And **shame**. *Why am I so different? I don't belong.*

## How's your "help" helping?

- Maybe I should **avoid**.
  - I'll say less than I intended to.

*(You could all go to lunch early!)*
  - Or only talk when I know I won't stutter. ...
  - I could change my words.
  - I might not talk at all. That's the best way not to stutter. Right?

## My point in all of these shenanigans:

- A Fluency Tool-**only** approach barks up the wrong tree..
- School-age (& older) kids get the message that we can make them "*stop stuttering*."
  - We can't. They can't, either.
- How much success have *any* of us had in making kids fluent *all* the time in *all* situations?

(Yaruss, 2012)

### My point in all of these shenanigans:

- When we try to *force* kids to use their Speech Tools & be fluent when they *can't* always be ...
- We send the message that **stuttering is bad ... and so are they.**  
(Yaruss, 2012)

### Something to think about ...

- I truly hope I am not ruffling any feathers!
- I *am* trying to be provocative & get us thinking & talking.
- How are the things we are doing to help, *helping*?

### Our tools may need some sharpening (& we'll need some new tools)

- There's nothing wrong with (some of) our tools, per se.
- But they can get be a little dull.



### A not-so-appealing box of tools ...

- What does a child see when he looks in the box? ....
  - Tools are a lot of work.
  - They take a lot of practice to learn.
  - They make me sound different.
  - They are hard to use.
  - They don't work all the time.
  - Would my speech teacher actually use these tools???



### Examining some tools: Airflow

- What do we know about **airflow**?
- **Evidence: Regulated breathing and airflow** (de Kinkelder & Boelens, 1998; Ladouceur & Martineau, 1982)
  - *But when airflow is the focus:*
  - Easily misconstrued by older kids
  - "Take a deep breath"
  - Audible inhalation/gasping for air
  - Audible exhalation
  - Talking on the end of the breath
  - Possible to exhale with considerable tension in the speech mechanism
    - (I generally leave this out of my Tool Box)

### But what about the breath?

- **But what do we know about the breath?**
  - As we respond to fear and stress, one of the first things to change is our *breathing*
  - An easier, more relaxed way of speaking comes from the diaphragm!
  - *More on this later. ...*

### Examining the tools: Response Contingencies

- What do we know about **response contingencies**?
- Evidence: **Response contingencies (Ingham, 1980; Ryan & Ryan, 1983)**
- Issues with transfer & maintenance of fluency
- Don't teach kids *what to do* with their speech mechanisms  
*(I don't pull these out of the tool box too often)*

### Examining the tools: Physical cues

- **Non-speech tools**
  - Tapping finger, hand, foot
  - Moving head
  - Moving limbs (hand & arm)
- Counterproductive with this age group
  - Become new, unwanted secondary behaviors in CWS
  - Draw attention away from the speech mechanism, where it belongs
- Rule: *Only use your speech machine to get speech going*  
*(Physical cues are never in my school-age tool box)*

### What (fluency) tools stay in the box?

- Note: These all change *tension* and *timing* of speech & take a *lot* of practice
- **Tools to initiate speech**
  - **Easy onset** – start phonation gently and gradually
  - **Light contact** – move the articulators slowly and touch gently; add friction to stops
  - **Smooth Start** – reduce rate & tension on the first syllable ; getting into the vowel

### What (Fluency) Tools stay in the box?

- **Tools to continue speech**
  - **Continuous Vocalization** (it's *not* continuous! There are voiceless sounds in English!)
    - Exaggerating phonation on vowels & voiced consonants
    - Keeping the voice “going” between words
  - **Smooth Movements** – keeping the articulators moving from word to word

### What (Fluency) Tools stay in the box?

- **Tools to continue speech**
  - **Phrasing** - sustained phonation & movement through phrase of exhalation
  - **Easier Relaxed Approach, Smooth Easy Speech, etc.** – Easy start, smooth movements into & between words in a phrase; after the easy beginning, letting the rest go in a more natural manner, with normal rate, pitch, loudness, and expression
    - **Idea: Sense of proprioception & anticipating the mechanics of speech**

### What (Fluency) Tools stay in the box?

- **Tools to manage overall act of communication**
  - Slowing speech rate
  - Pausing

### Sharpening the (Fluency) Tools

- For every tool, the CWS needs to know:
  - **What** (exactly) is it?
  - **Why** should I use it? What's in it for me?
  - **How** do I use it?
  - **When** should I use it?
  - **What** should it sound like? Feel like?
  - **How** do I know it's working?
  - **What** if it doesn't work?
  - **How** often should I practice?
  - **What** else do I need to know?

### Sharpening the Fluency Tools

- **Managing Pace:**
  - "Brain Time"/Wait Time (Cochrane)
    - Time to plan & formulate your message
    - Resisting time pressure/"Speak when you're ready"
  - Flexible pausing
    - *Before* speaking as needed
    - *While* speaking as needed at natural intervals
  - Flexible rate
    - *Slightly* stretched syllables
    - *Slightly* slower rate

### Sharpening the Fluency Tools

- **Exploring** Smooth Starts
  - **Feeling** the sensations –larynx, lips, tongue, nose, jaw
  - **Actively listening** for the sound
  - **Voice Power**
    - Experiencing this wonderful sound and movement!
- Always from ...
 

Less natural	➔	More natural
<i>"More obvious"</i>		<i>"Sounds like me"</i>

### Sharpening the Fluency Tools

- **Phrasing & Flow**
  - Continuing the *sound* through words & between words in a phrase
  - Continuing the *movements* through words & between words in a phrase
    - "Make the words hold hands"
    - "Connecting the words"
- Always moving from ...
 

Less natural	➔	More natural
<i>"More obvious"</i>		<i>"Sounds like me"</i>

### Sharpening the Fluency Tools

- **Playing** with the Speech Machine
  - Inviting a sense of play & fun
  - Contrast drills:
    - Too slow/too fast! Too hard/too soft!
  - Stretch it Out
  - How can long can you go? *Etc.*

### Sharpening the Fluency Tools

- Guiding questions:
  - *What does it **sound** like?*
  - *What does it **feel** like?*
  - *Does it feel/sound **like you**?*
  - *What are we doing that's helping?*
  - *How is what we're doing helping you become the kind of communicator you want to be?*

## Repacking the Tool Box

- So far, we've talked about Fluency Tools to address the motor impairment in stuttering.
- We'll need some more tools.
- We'd better get a bigger box.



## Tools to modify stuttering

- We have 3 chances to change a moment of stuttering:
  - **After** it occurs: Cancellation
  - **Before** it occurs: Preparatory set (Ease Out)
  - **While** it occurs: Pull-Out (Ease Out)

(Van Riper, 1973)

## Tools to modify stuttering

- **Cancellation:** Modifying tension *after* the stuttering is over – saying it again with less tension.
  - E.g., “Mmmmy ... mmy name is Rob.”
  - Often used early in therapy when CWS has less awareness & control
  - It doesn't really “cancel” out the stutter!
  - Not “starting over” or “fixing” stuttering or replacing stuttering with fluent speech.
  - Builds awareness & the ability to modify tension (some desensitizing ,too)

## Tools to modify stuttering

- **Ease-Ins (Preparatory Sets)**
- Modifying tension *before* anticipated stuttering
  - Feel tension as you approach the sound, reduce it and ease in **ON** the stuttered sound
  - Move on to the next word
  - **NOT** avoiding or changing the word, or pushing it out

## Tools to modify stuttering

- **Ease-Outs (Pull-outs, Slides)**
- Modifying tension *during* a moment of stuttering
- Notice physical tension & ease out **ON** the stuttered sound
- Move on to the next word
- Reducing tense articulatory postures

## Tools to modify stuttering

- **Voluntary stuttering:** On purpose!
  - Not “Rock Star” stuttering
  - Stuttering “like me”
  - To practice easing into a moment of anticipated stuttering **ON** the stuttering sound
  - To practice easing out **ON** the stuttered sound *the way you stutter*
  - Helps develop skill in managing stuttering
  - Also desensitizes – reduces fear & desire to hide stuttering

## Beyond Speech Tools

- What else we know about tools: CWS push back.
- **IT** didn't work. I couldn't do **IT**. I tried to use my tools. **They** didn't work.
- The reaction ... & those words ... remove **you** from the true event...the experience pf stuttering ... how **you** reacted.
  - Fusion with your thoughts
  - Evaluation of experience
  - Avoidance of your experience
  - Reason-giving for your behavior

## Beyond Speech Tools

- *My new thing is to stop using the terms: "tools" and "strategies" --instead I say: "reaction" to your stuttering. You start with a "reaction" to stuttered event by pushing, avoiding, increasing tension and secondaries, etc. The reaction that you want is to gain control before or after the event in an efficient manner. This makes it a **personal** event--different for everyone and gives **understanding** to the reaction. -Rita Thurman*

## Reducing reactions

- **1. Education about body & brain**
  - Exploring the **speech machine** in depth
  - Learning about how it works for fluent & stuttered speech
  - Exploring how I stutter
    - Motor behavior
    - Reactions – how the body responds to stress , fear & panic
      - Fight or flight

## Reducing reactions

- **2. Exploring the breath & mindfulness**
  - **Circle of breath**
    - Air comes in –pause –air goes out – pause
    - Phase of exhalation is where talking happens



## Reducing reactions

- **Exploring breath & mindfulness**
- Diphragmatic breathing (“Belly breathing”) for relaxation response
  - Abdominal breathing
  - Deep breathing
  - Belly breathing
- Expansion of the abdomen rather than chest
- Slow, deep, relaxed breathing in and out through the nose, often to count of 10
- Interrupting **Fight or Flight** (*sympathetic*)& triggering **relaxation** response (*parasympathetic*)

## Reducing reactions

- **Exploring Breath & Mindfulness**
  - “Notice 5 things” – 5 senses – especially see, hear, feel
  - “Feel your feet in your shoes”
  - Mindfulness activities for kids
    - <http://www.actonpurpose.com.au/Mindfulness-activities-for-young>

## Reducing reactions

- **3. Exploring relaxation**
- Contrast drills – tense/loose
- Progressive muscle relaxation:
  - Maybe focus on face, neck, abdomen for CWS
  - 4 main steps for Progressive Muscle Relaxation:
    - -Isolate muscle group
    - -Tense muscle group (5-10 seconds)
    - -Concentrate on muscles
    - -Relax-release muscle tension (20 seconds)

## Reducing Reactions



- **4. Systematic Desensitization**
  - **Gradual** exposure to the things we are afraid of gradually reduces the fear
  - Not tossing a child in to sink or swim!
  - Use *hierarchies* from less to more feared situations
  - Gradual exposure & gradual reduction of symptoms



## Reducing reactions

- **“Stutter Pie”** (Rita Thurman)



- What do I do when I feel panic?
- Interrupting “fight or flight”
  - No fight (with yourself-struggle/tension)
  - No flight (avoidance)
- **How do I usually react?**
- **How do I want to react?**

## Reducing reactions

- **What gets the candy?** (Chmela)
  - Circle of Breath

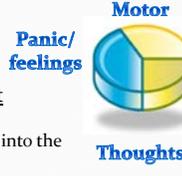


1. Air comes in
2. Air goes out
3. Disruption
4. Do something to get speech started again
5. Whatever gets speech started again **GETS THE CANDY**



## Beyond Speech Tools: Reactions

Rita Thurman



**Catch It** → **Change it**

**Before:** *Think* - breathe, go slow, feel it, slide into the sound, move into vowel

**During:** *Think* - ease out of tension, slide into the next sound, move into the vowel

How do you **want** to react?

## Reducing reactions

- Promoting **acceptance** of all parties
- CWS, families, teachers, peers
- Goal is not “fixing stuttering” or producing stutter-free speech!
- I *expect* you to stutter! Stuttering is *expected*. (And OK by me.)

### What's "Acceptance"?

- Not giving up on "fluency" or better communication
- It's not "throwing in the towel," or waving the white flag.



### What's "Acceptance"?

- Acceptance is **acknowledging** the plain facts, without judgment
  - So resistance is down
  - Willingness is up
  - Change is possible

### Reducing reactions

- Identify **thoughts & feelings** & how they interfere with communication (avoidance reduction)
- Getting to know:
  - **Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)**– identifying, challenging, & reframing unhelpful thoughts & beliefs
  - **Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT)**– *willingness* to accept unpleasant thoughts/feelings while taking committed action toward a valued outcome

### Really get to know Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT)

<p><b>Instead of this (FEAR):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fusion with your thoughts</li> <li>• Evaluation of experience</li> <li>• Avoidance of your experience</li> <li>• Reason-giving for your behavior</li> </ul>	<p><b>Try this (ACT):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accept your reactions and be present</li> <li>• Choose a valued direction</li> <li>• Take action</li> </ul>
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### Reducing reactions

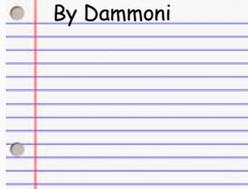
- Get to the "**core**" behaviors
  - The struggle on the surface results partly from attempts to avoid the underlying motor disruptions – repetitions, prolongations, blocks
  - Desensitize to the *core* if you want to reduce reactions
- **Easing in/out** versus **pushing through**

### Reducing reactions

- **Reducing avoidance** – of sounds, words, situations
  - The more we avoid, the more we're afraid - & vice-versa
  - Sometimes "**just doing it,**" not speech management, **is** the goal
  - Setting goals, e.g.,
    - "Exact Sentence to Say" agreement
    - "Exact Word to Say" agreement

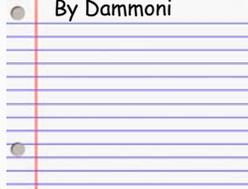
### Reducing Dammoni's reaction ...

"Mr. Dellinger, can I read you my story?"  
 "By D ... .."  
 "D ... .."  
 "M ... .."  
 (*Face turns red*)  
 "I can't say it. ...."  
 (*He gives up*). ...



### Reducing Dammoni's reaction ...

**Mr. D:** What if I said it's OK to say your name, even if you stutter?  
**D:** (*Puzzled look*)  
**Mr. D:** Really.  
**D:** D... .. Da ...mmoni.  
**Mr. D:** You *did* say it.  
**D:** (*Face lights up*)  
 I did it!



### Reducing environmental reactions

- Educating & working with **families**
- Educating & working with **teachers**
- Educating **peers**
- Dealing with any **teasing/bullying** that occurs
- Involving students:
  - *What you want \_\_\_\_ to know?*
  - *How can \_\_\_\_ help?*
  - *What do you want \_\_\_ to do when \_\_\_?*
- Fostering **acceptance** in all interested parties is key. *Stutter-free is never the goal.*

### So we've got a bigger tool box, & we've gone beyond tools.

- So what do I use with my child who stutters?



### Evaluating the "Whole Disorder"

- **Motor**
  - Formal
    - **Stuttering Severity Instrument, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition (SS-4)** OR
    - **Test of Childhood Stuttering (TOCS)**
  - Informal
    - **Real-Time Analysis (Yaruss)**
      - Speech Disfluency Count Sheet
      - Described in WCPSS Fluency Guidelines
    - Online % Stuttered Syllables

[www.natke-verlag.de/silbenzaehler/index\\_en.html](http://www.natke-verlag.de/silbenzaehler/index_en.html)

- Observation

### Evaluation

- Stuttering is **highly variable**
  - May not occur in some situations at all (e.g., speech room)
  - Collect samples in *multiple situations at different times*

## Evaluation

- **Social-Emotional**
  - Formal
    - **Overall Assessment of the Speaker's Experience of Stuttering (OASES)**
      - School-Age - ages 6-12
      - Teen-Age - ages 13-17
    - **Behavioral Assessment for School-Age Children Who Stutter (BAB) - ages 6-15**
      - **Communication Attitudes Test-Revised (CAT-R)** - predecessor to BAB

## Evaluation

- **Social-Emotional/Sensory**
  - Informal
    - Interview with student, general to specific (Chmela & Reardon, 2001)
    - Pencil & Paper Tasks (Chmela & Reardon, 2001)
    - Parent & Teacher checklists
    - Sensory Checklist (Yaruss)
    - Observation
    - Is the child being bullied/teased?

## Evaluation

- Identify *Communication Discrepancies* (Chmela)
  - The difference between *environmental expectations* and what an individual *does*
  - Adverse educational effects
    - **Common Core State Standards Applied to Speech-Language Services**
    - **Common Core State Standards Initiative**
    - Teacher checklists/interview

## Eligibility

- **Impairment:** Motor, Social-Emotional & Sensory
- **Adverse effect:**
  - **Reactions** (affective, behavioral, cognitive)
  - **Social-Emotional:** Impact on the child's life
  - **Access to the Common Core** (communication discrepancies, activity limitation, participation restriction)
  - Bullying/teasing
- **Need for specially designed instruction**
  - Readiness: How is stuttering affecting the *child* (vs. teacher or parent)
  - Timing is important.
  - Not every child who stutters *needs* treatment *at this time*.

## The Goals of Treatment

- **Effective communication**
  - "People who stutter can become *better than average communicators*" (Chmela)
- 1. **Reduce impairment:**
  - Change speech to improve fluency
  - Change speech to modify stuttering
- 2. **Reduce reactions:**
  - Reduce tension, struggle, & avoidance
  - Shift attitudes & foster acceptance

## The Goals of Treatment

3. **Reduce environmental reactions**
  - Educate families, teachers, peers, to foster acceptance
  - Coping with teasing/bullying
4. **Reduce adverse effects**
  - Access to Common Core
  - Socialization

### Planning therapy (flexible order)

- **Education: Speech machine/brain** & how they work
  - Learning about talking and stuttering
- **Breath & mindfulness**
- **Reduce impairment**
  - Usually **stuttering modification 1st, fluency shaping later**
    - Getting “too fluent” early on can be a problem
      - Unrealistic expectations for speech outside of therapy
      - Little to practice & trouble with transfer
    - Fosters acceptance & a focus on communication as a whole
    - Helps reduce reactions
    - Doesn't overemphasize “Fluency”

### Planning Therapy

- **Reduce reactions:** Focus on reducing **struggle/tension & avoidance** & moving on with communication
- **Flexible fluency shaping** after stuttering modification
- What do good communicators do?
  - Effective communication is the REAL goal
- Address any other concerns that need attention, e.g., bullying.

### What do good communicators do? (Chmela)

- **Attentive**
  - Being “In” the conversation
  - Connecting
  - Responding
- **Assertive**
  - Speaking for yourself
  - Advocating for yourself
  - Resisting time pressure
  - Not avoiding

### What do good communicators do? (Chmela)

- **Confident**
  - Eye contact
  - Handshake
  - Greeting
  - Body language
  - Volume of voice

### What do good communicators do? (Chmela)

- **Effective**
  - Increased “fluency”
  - Increased ease & reduced effort
  - Efficient rate of information flow
  - Language, articulation, voice/resonance/pragmatics
- **Proactive**
  - Honesty about communication
  - Goal planning & follow-through
- I would add ... **courage!** ...

### Transfer

- Using these “effective communication skills,” and other skills, where they matter most ...
- **Outside of the therapy room**



## Transfer

- Starts on Day 1!
- Speech notebook – home & school
- Involving teachers & families
- Build into the therapy process
- **Journaling**
- Have students **call your voicemail** and leave a message, *with a goal in mind.*
  - *Hi, this is \_\_\_\_\_. I'm going to tell you three things I did today. First, \_\_\_\_\_. Next, \_\_\_\_\_. Then, \_\_\_\_\_. Have a good day. Goodbye!*

## Transfer

- **Rating scales**

(none of the time) 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 (all the time)

*I used a Smooth Start on the first word when reading aloud*

(didn't do it) 1-2-3-4-5-6-7 (did it)

*I stood up and gave my presentation, with or without stuttering*

## Transfer

- **Contract Cards**

Name : \_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_

Goal: Student will use behavior with person at location when doing activity.

*Johnny will Ease Out of voluntary stuttering with Mrs. Smith while having a teacher conference at her desk.*

1-2-3-4-5-6-7 teacher and student rating

## Transfer

- **Worry Ladder**

- Hierarchy of speaking situations the child fears or sees as difficult, least to most

<b>Most</b>	<i>Stuttering in front of whole school</i>
	<i>Doing a report in class</i>
	<i>Talking to a person I don't know</i>
	<i>Stuttering on the phone</i>
	<i>Asking questions in class</i>
<b>Least</b>	<i>Talking to my friends</i>

## Problem Solving

- Whenever you have a serious problem or concern (that requires more than just active listening) rather than *freaking out & panicking ...*
- Go to a policy of **problem solving** (Cochrane)
  - Gets us out of our worry (past) *anxiety* (future) and gets us into the *present moment*, the only time in which we have to **change** anything

## Problem Solving

- **Name the problem:** *The problem is \_\_\_\_.*
- **Describe relationship to it:**  
*I feel \_\_ because \_\_ & I want \_\_\_\_.*
- **Brainstorm possible solutions:** *Say/write anything.*
- **Discuss consequences of each choice:** *If \_\_, then.*
- **Choose 1 or 2**
- **Implement**
- **Evaluate**

### Problem Solving

- **The problem** is I stutter, and I feel bad because I hate it and I want to stop stuttering.
- **Brainstorm ideas:** 1. Try to stop stuttering and be fluent all the time. 2. Become a better communicator
- **Discuss Consequences:** If I try to stop stuttering and be fluent all the time, then I can't do it & I'll be frustrated & won't talk. If I try to become a better communicator, then I can do it and will feel better about myself and talk more. ...

### Motivation to do all of this

- Change is *hard!* Nothing comes for free.
- **Motivation** is tied to the *valued outcome* for the child

### Motivation to do all of this

- What do you want?
- Why are we doing this?
- What are we doing that's helping?
- How is what we're doing helping you be the kind of communicator you want to be?

### Courage

- *Feel the fear and do it anyway? ...*
- *Fake it 'til you make it? ...*
- I like this better:
- **"The actions of confidence come first; the feelings of confidence come later."**  
-Russ Harris

### How do we write goals for this stuff?

- Attack the **Adverse Effect** & make the **Common Core** your friend.
- *The student will do behavior with communicative partner while doing activity at/in location.* ...

### How do we write goals for this stuff?

- Given advance notice, the student will respond to the teacher's questions while seated at his desk during a teacher-led discussion in social studies. ...
- Note how a "speech tool" is not necessarily required
- Sometimes just doing it is the goal!
- ... in 4 out of 5 opportunities OR
- as measured by average ratings of 1-2 on a 7-point rating scale completed by the student/teacher &/or clinician

**How do we write goals for this stuff?**

- *The student will do behavior with communicative partner while doing activity at/in location. ...*

<b>DO</b>	<b>WHO</b>
• Eye contact	Teacher
• Smooth Start	SLP
• Ease out	Peers
• Voluntary stuttering	Guided Reading Group
• Phrasing and flow	Partner

**Speech (Fluency) Tools approach: What students say (FRIENDS)**

- I was just doing techniques. I don't know what they are. I didn't really know what I was doing. What I was doing was not helping. I didn't want to do it outside the therapy room. I knew all the tools, but it's hard to use them when you need to. *(High school student)*

**Beyond Speech Tools: What students say (FRIENDS)**

- Speech therapy is not a way for me to be perfect, but to help me say what I want to say, to express yourself. *(High school student)*
- She (school-based SLP) didn't just start in *fixing* my speech, or fixing my *feelings*, either. She took the time to get to know me. She was always checking in – what are you having a hard time with now? *(College student)*

**Beyond Speech Tools: What parents say (FRIENDS)**

- Look, I'm an engineer. I see a problem, I want to fix it. I wanted to fix the stuttering. But Rita (SLP) took me aside and showed me, this is a problem you can't just "fix."

**Beyond Speech Tools: What teachers say (Wilburn)**

- She stutters sometimes, but she's getting her message across and doing everything all the other students are doing.

**Maybe the single most important thing you can say to a kid...**

- **“I can't make you stop stuttering...**
- **“But I can help you ....”**

### Important question(s) you can ask

- **What are you learning in speech?**
- If the answer is, *to stop stuttering ...*
  - Say: **“Oh, I can’t make you stop stuttering, but I can. ...”**

### Remember

- **The key factor determining the validity of the treatment approach is the “client’s individual response to treatment.”** –Kully & Langevin, 2005
  - The goal is *not* to stop stuttering!
  - The goal *is* **better communication**, *whether stuttering or not.*

### Guiding questions

- *What are we doing that’s helping?*
  - *How is what we are doing helping the child to communicate better and more freely?*

### Questions?

- Always feel free to contact me with any thoughts, questions, or concerns.
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