

# How Do I Talk to My Child About Stuttering?

Whether your child has recently started stuttering or has for some time, you may wonder if it is OK to talk about stuttering with them. For some, stuttering might feel off limits, even though everyone is aware of it. What might surprise you is that it is not only OK to talk about stuttering, it has benefits. Acknowledging struggle and validating feelings can be helpful. Talking about stuttering establishes a culture of openness and acceptance, which supports confident and joyful communication, stuttered or not. Below are suggestions for ways to do this.

TIP:	EXAMPLE PHRASING:
Label their emotions for them so they can learn the vocabulary. Doing something as simple as expressing emotions out loud can be helpful to children.	"I can tell you're sad" or "You seem frustrated."
Help your young child learn about feelings. Label them, draw them, read stories about people experiencing feelings, model your own feelings and coping strategies.	"Mom is frustrated so she's going to go to the other room and calm down alone for five minutes and then we can talk about it" or "That girl in the story was so excited for her birthday that she could hardly sit still! And she was so sad when the birthday party was over."
When your children are old enough to come to you with strong emotions that they need help to process, allow them to express themselves. Children need to learn that their feelings are not threatening and that you can help them learn to navigate them.	Instead of "I'm sure that girl was not trying to hurt your feelings" or "You don't have to cry about that," try "Wow that sounds like it made you feel really hurt, I'm so sorry. Tell me more."
Create a culture of celebrating everyone's differences in the home. You can even make a book together where everyone draws pages that celebrate each difference. A book like this can help your child view stuttering as just another difference, like eye color.	"Mom has an accent in English, Sonia has a stutter, Dad is tall, Emily has lots of freckles. Mom is great at math but dad is great at cooking. Sonia is a great dancer and Emily loves gymnastics. Sonia is kind and always invites new kids to play with her."
Acknowledge moments of stuttering from time to time, or when your child seems to acknowledge them.	"Nice job keeping your eyes on me during that bumpy word." or "That was a little tricky, but you kept talking, nice work!"
Tell your child that it's OK to stutter. This is one of the things that makes them different, and that's OK.	"It's OK to stutter. What you have to say is always worth saying."
When others ask you about their stuttering, model for your child how you can explain it to others : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Name it (stuttering)</li><li>• Normalize it</li><li>• Tell a listener what to do</li></ul>	"Yes, he stutters so you might hear some silent moments or repetitions, but he knows exactly what he wants to say, so just give him a moment to finish. Stuttering is just one of the things that makes him unique."
When your child is ready, introduce them to a community of people who stutter. Some organizations with local chapters include: National Stuttering Association, FRIENDS, Stuttering Association for the Young.	"Will you go with me to this family night where there will be other people who stutter? I'd like to learn more about stuttering together because it's something that makes you unique."

## WHAT IF MY CHILD IS BULLIED?



- Explain that they have not done anything wrong.
  - Bullies do what they do because of their own low self-esteem and trouble understanding that others might be different.
- Remind them that what they have to say is important-their voice matters.
- Roleplay with your child ways that they could respond.
  - Take turns playing your child and the bully and try out different reactions. This may include walking away, trying to diffuse the situation by saying something like “so?” etc.
  - Make it fun and come up with lots of choices your child has in that situation. If they present an idea that might not be as productive, still put it on the list, but later go through and discuss the pros and cons of each option to pick your favorite.
- Talk to a teacher or parent who is around when the bully is present to keep an eye on the situation.
- Resist the urge to prevent bullying by emphasizing “controlling” stuttering or hiding stuttering. This can give the impression that it is their responsibility to not be bullied as opposed to the bully’s responsibility to not bully.
  - A parent’s job is to hold their child’s hand through the discomfort, not prevent all of it.

