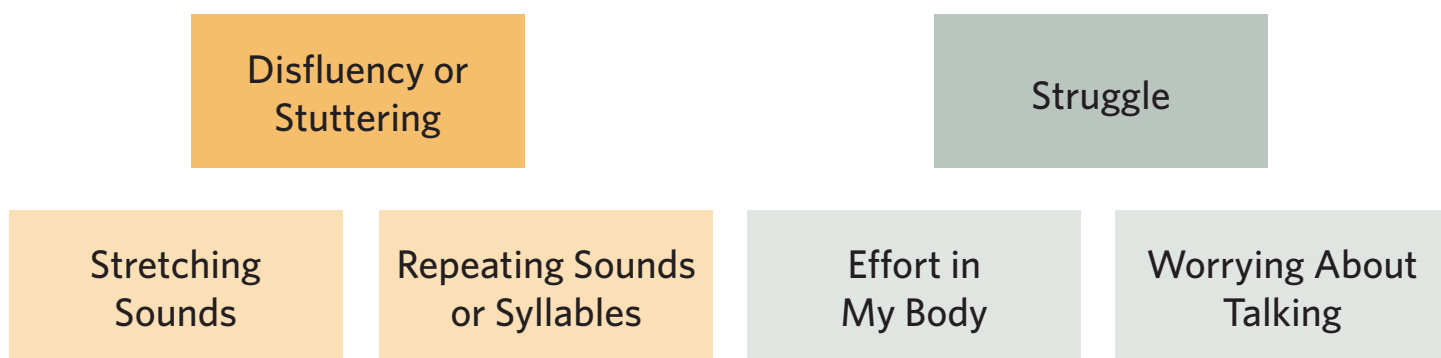


Why Does Stuttering Seem Difficult For Some?

It is helpful to separate stuttering (what a person does) from a person's experience of stuttering. Stuttering is simply another way of speaking, and many people may stutter easily without any impact on communication. They speak freely and confidently without fear or holding back. There could be repetition (e.g., ha-ha-ha-happy) or prolongation (e.g., wwwhen) in their speech, and stuttering coexists with confident, effective communication.

STUTTERING IS NOT THE SAME AS STRUGGLING



As seen in the diagram above, some people develop struggle in their stuttering. Struggle can occur in the speech pattern and in the body. It can also take the form of socio-emotional struggle. For many, the problem of stuttering isn't the stutter, but the fear of stuttering. In response to this fear, they may learn ways of hiding and avoiding it (such as losing eye contact during disfluency, substituting words, saying "uh" or "um" before a feared word, not answering the phone, avoiding introductions at a party or work meeting). In general, anything one does to avoid showing stuttering contributes to struggle.

Not all struggle is accompanied by fear or avoidance. Some people, (especially young children), do not experience worry or fear about stuttering. Instead, they may struggle from physical tension when they stutter. This occurs when the muscles they use to speak tighten and make talking difficult. This can come from efforts to push words out. For them, the challenge may be finding effective ways to say the sounds and words they want in a comfortable, forward-moving way.



WHO NEEDS SPEECH THERAPY?

Speech therapy is not for everyone, and not everyone who stutters needs therapy. It's OK to stutter! So if you (or your child) are stretching out sounds or repeating sounds or syllables without the types of unwanted thoughts or feelings described above (e.g., struggle), there may be no problem(s) for therapy to address. If your child seems to struggle speaking, holds back from participating, or seems uncomfortable communicating, therapy could help.