

# What and What Not to Praise

It can be hard, as a parent or any listener, to know what to say and what not to say. How do I make sure they don't become self-conscious? How do I build confidence?

## THINGS THEY CAN CONTROL:

- The courage to speak up, especially in situations that are more nerve-wracking
- The content of what they want to say (rather than how they say it)
- Persistence in the face of a moment of stuttering (or any challenges, really!)

## THINGS OUTSIDE OF THEIR CONTROL:

- If and when they stutter. They might be spontaneously fluent purely because they happen to be. They will stutter sometimes because they are a person who stutters.

Praise their courage and resilience.

INSTEAD OF...	TRY SAYING...
“Slow down and use your tools” “Stop and start over”	“I love that when you stuttered you kept moving forward through it and said what you wanted to say!”
“Take a deep breath” <i>(Note: stuttering is not caused by nerves or lack of breath support)</i>	“I like how you told me exactly what was on your mind” <i>Remain calm and model a patient demeanor</i>
“Nice job ordering your food, your speech was so smooth- no bumps!”	“That was a little new, and I know you were nervous, but you told the waitress exactly what you wanted to eat, that was very brave!”
Looking away or tensing up when your child has a tense moment of disfluency	Remain neutral and encouraging: “That was a little tricky but you kept going, nice work!”

## RATIONALE FOR THIS SHIFT:

- Praising fluent moments may reinforce avoidance behaviors or lead to new ones.
  - They also may be just talking spontaneously without stuttering.
- It sends the message that the content, not the delivery, is the most important aspect of communication.
- It may reinforce more speaking, more courage, and more persistence.
- Even if you don't feel calm on the inside, it can be helpful to appear calm and patient on the surface.



## REACH OUT TO YOUR SPEECH LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST IF YOU NOTICE ANY OF THE FOLLOWING:

- Physical tension in and around moments of stuttering
- Frustration at trying to get a word out or other reactions to moments of stuttering
- Speaking less or asking others to speak for them