

STUTTERING IN CHILDREN

Most children exhibit some dysfluency in their speech between the ages of 2 and 5. Here is a list of some things that can contribute to the onset and severity of the dysfluency exhibited :

1. A significant gain in language abilities and vocabulary at a rapid rate.
2. Moving to a new home
3. The birth or expected birth of a sibling
4. Beginning school
5. Toilet training
6. A traumatic event or loss in the family

As you can see, this list includes things that most preschoolers go through at one time or another.

Below is a list of suggestions that can help children move through these dysfluencies or at least reduce the tension and struggle associated with their dysfluencies.

1. Parents, teachers and caregivers should use a slower rate of speech with the child whenever possible.
2. Although it is difficult, parents and teachers should decrease the number of direct questions asked of the child and allow her to engage in more open-ended conversations.
3. Try to avoid interrupting the child or finishing her sentences even when she is in the middle of a stutter and you know what she is trying to say.
4. Use extra pauses when speaking to the child and when responding to the child wait a few seconds after she finishes talking --- try not to talk right over her.
5. Whenever possible, spend some quiet time playing with the child in which she is allowed to direct the activity and the conversation. In fact, the adult should feel free to talk as little as possible during these times.

All of these suggestions are used to slow down our interactions and conversations with the child and are often very effective in reducing the amount of dysfluency the child exhibits.