

Children's Speech and Language Therapy Service

Information Sheet 9: Stammering: How to react to your child

Giving advice to the child during general conversation.

Giving your child advice about their stammer can be unhelpful. It may help at the time, but it can affect their confidence to talk in the future. Examples:

- Take a deep breath
- Think before you speak
- Calm down and start again
- Speak more slowly

These strategies should only be used with the guidance of your Speech and Language Therapist.

What you can do to help

- Avoid giving advice about the stammer during general conversation.
- Give your child lots of time to talk
- Be positive about other aspects of communication e.g. vocabulary, looking etc.
- Ask older children how they would like you to help.

Reacting to the stammer

It is very natural to show signs of concerns when your child is stammering. Occasionally you may feel impatient if they are taking a long time to answer. If your child sees this on your face or hears it in what you say, they may try to hide the stammer because it upsets you. Children naturally want to please people. If your child sees you are upset they may try to hide the stammer because they think they are doing something wrong.

What you can do to help

- Take care that you are not showing signs of concern when your child stammers. Show that you are interested in what they have to say.
- Rather than thinking of your child as a 'stammerer', think of them as a child learning to talk who is having some difficulty talking at the moment.
- If your child seems aware of the talking difficulty and puts their hand over their mouth, stops talking or says that they 'can't talk right' then reassure them that everyone finds it difficult to talk at times.

Further information can be found on the website for the British Stammering Association (www.stamma.org)