



### What is Stammering?

Stammering, is also known as Stuttering and Dysfluency (they all mean exactly the same). It is a relatively common speech difficulty in childhood with approximately 1 in every 12 children experiencing it. Many children will stop stammering naturally or with the help of speech therapy but this condition can persist into adulthood.

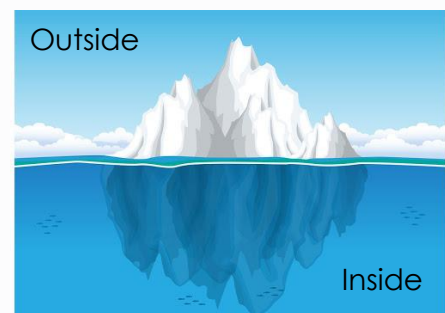
Stammering is very individual and each child will have their own behaviours. Severity also differs from person to person and from situation to situation. Stammering is unpredictable and can change throughout the day, week, month and school term. Over a lifetime a stammer may come and go, disappearing for weeks or months, where individuals speak relatively fluently, before the stammer reappears.

Stammering is the way that words get stuck or repeated but it also affects individuals on the inside, affecting their thoughts and feelings and this in turn affects their behaviour i.e. their willingness to speak or say certain sounds / words.

Examples of stammering may include:

#### Outside

- Repetitions (whole words, parts of words or individual sounds)  
e.g. "G-g-go away!" or "When, when, when is playtime?"
- Stretching out sounds  
e.g. "I like that sssstory."
- Blocking of sounds (no sound can be made for several seconds)  
e.g. "----I got a book."
- Facial and body tension
- Breathe in an unusual way i.e. hold their breath while speaking, talk to the end of their breath and then take a gasp, or take an exaggerated breath before speaking.



#### Inside

- Feel anxious, worried, frustrated, self-conscious, embarrassed, ashamed, angry or even guilty about stammering
- Think that they shouldn't stammer because people don't like it
- Develop the idea that they are not good at talking
- Avoid words /choose different words.
- Avoid speaking or say "I've forgotten" or "It doesn't matter"
- Avoid some speaking situations (not volunteering, hanging back, not joining in, or by asking someone to speak for them)

# Supporting a Stammer



West Midlands  
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## Stammering Facts

- Stammering usually starts between the ages of **two and five** (Some children will start stammering after the age of five) often when there is an increase in language skills, meaning a higher load on still-developing motor-skills. Onset can be **gradual** or **sudden**.
- Stammering affects equal numbers of boys and girls to start with but girls are more likely to recover. This means that later on there are about **4 or 5 times as many boys** who stammer as girls.
- Research states that between **5%- 8% of children** stammer at some point. Within the **adult population 1%** of people stammer.
- There is **no** relationship between stammering and intellectual ability.
- People from **all walks of life**, everywhere in the world, stammer.
- There are many, **many highly successful people**, and famous people, in various walks of life **who stammer**.
- It's okay to stammer – **what** a child has to say is more important than **how** they say it.
- Being **bilingual**, or multi-lingual, does **not** cause stammering

## What causes a Stammer

We simply don't know yet for certain why some people stammer but we do know that parents do not cause stammering. Research indicates that stammering is a neurological condition related to the part of the brain where speech develops. Genetics/ family history, language skills, motor speech skills, brain differences and emotions/temperament have been shown to be linked to Stammering.

- Stammering often runs in families – around 60% of people who stammer have a relative who stammers or used to stammer.
- Scientists have found very subtle differences in the way that the parts of the brain involved in speaking interact and also some subtle structural differences.
- Delayed language development, other speech and language difficulties, or highly advanced language skills can influence a stammer.
- When children who stammer speak quickly, it may put too much 'load' on their speech motor capacity, especially when they are young.
- Stammering does *not* develop because a child is anxious or shy – although if a child has a stammer then they may stammer more if they are feeling anxious and they may become less confident about speaking *because* of their experience of stammering.

