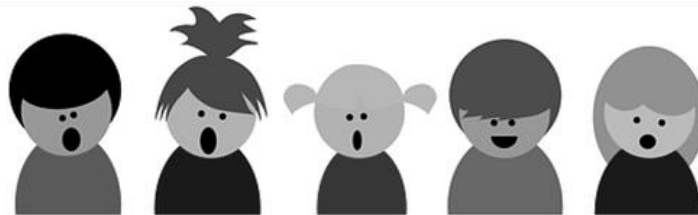




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Helping your school age child Bumpy talking



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Talking to others involves many skills and these skills develop throughout childhood and into the teenage years.

When children are learning to talk or have extra pressures to speak well, many will go through a phase of pausing, repeating words or sounds and stopping and starting again. Talking may not flow smoothly or fluently and instead may sound 'bumpy'. For example:

" Can can can I..", "Mu mu mummy..." "Can I hhhhhave cake."

Fluency may break down causing speech to sound bumpy when a child:

- says longer words,
- tries more complicated sentences
- is asked to explain things, or
- is excited about retelling a story

Parents may say: "It's as if his brain is going faster than his mouth!" Fluency may also change depending on the situation a child is in, how they are feeling, and whom they are talking to. It might be that a child who is experiencing bumpy talking, finds talking difficult in other ways too.

When this bumpiness happens so often that it starts to create tension, interferes with talking or cause distress to the child or listener, then 'stammering' may develop. Stammering and stuttering mean the same thing.

Many children experience bumpy talking, but don't develop a stammer. Unfortunately it is impossible to tell for sure which children will just pass through this stage and which children will go on to develop a stammer. Stammering may come and go at any age.

Parents and families do not cause stammering. However a child's environment is important and this leaflet offers ideas of how you can help to make speaking easier for your child.

If you are concerned about your child's speech, seek advice from a qualified speech and language therapist.

Help make speaking easier for your child

Please adapt suggestions to take account of your child's age and stage of development.

Organise short (5 minutes) one-to-one time with your child on a regular basis, when you are both calm and not in a rush and not likely to be interrupted. Give your child your undivided attention. Let your child choose what you can enjoy together.

Build your child's confidence by focusing on what your child is doing well and praising him/her for this, without focusing on his/her talking.

Look at your family's conversations. Are you letting each other finish what you want to say? Is anybody hogging all the talking time? Do you interrupt each other when trying to speak? Explaining the importance of taking turns when talking together.



Tips for talking:

Avoid

- Guessing the word or finishing sentences however tempting this might be! You might get it wrong and make your child feel cross!
- Asking your child to "slow down" –this is too hard for a young child
- Asking your child to "take a deep breath" as this can become part of the problem.
- Asking your child to stop and start again.

Use normal eye contact. Try not to look away from your child when he/she is having difficulty talking.

Show that you are interested and listening to what is being said, not how it is being said.

Allow time for your child to finish what he or she has to say, rather than finishing it for them. Try to show that you are at ease, and not in a hurry to prevent a sense of urgency and tension from building up.

If you don't have time then say so..."I want to hear what you have to say, but I have to make this phonecall now –can we talk later?" Make sure you remember your promise.

You might try to talk more slowly. This helps to create a calm relaxed atmosphere for speaking. Rapid conversations can increase pressure on a child who stammers and this can make it more difficult for them to be more fluent.

Speak in a language that can be understood more easily. For advice on supporting your bilingual child who stammers go to www.stammeringcentre.org/advice-sheet .

Try not to ask lots of questions, one after the other. One question is enough, and give your child plenty of time to reply.

Be a good model and keep your words and sentences uncomplicated. Children who stammer often stammer more on complex words and long, difficult sentences.

Do I mention it?

Parents are often worried about how to respond when their child is having difficulty with talking.

- ✓ If your young child is aware of the stammer, then it may be useful to mention it thoughtfully. For example: "That was a hard word to say but well done, you tried your best."
- ✓ If your older child is aware of the stammer and it feels right, ask them what they think would be helpful when they are having difficulty with their talking. Being open about it is more natural than trying to pretend it isn't happening.

References

- The British Stammering Association:
<http://www.stammering.org/help-information/parents/school-children>
- The Stammering Centre
www.stammeringcentre.org