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Recommendations for Parents and Caregivers of Young Children who Stutter

Parents and caregivers do not cause stuttering, yet they can be part of the solution. In fact, they are probably already doing some things that help their child speak more easily. Some areas parents **may** work on in therapy sessions that could help their child to speak more easily include:

- **Minimizing time pressures**

Parents/caregivers could use more pauses in their speech at appropriate/ natural places along with pausing for a moment before responding to their child. Using an unhurried, gentle, yet natural rate can help to set a more relaxed pace. This will allow your child more time to plan what he is trying to say along with coordinating the many quick muscle movements involved in speaking.

- **Balance questions and comments**

Allow your child plenty of time to respond to your questions. Become aware of the amount of questions posed to your child during your interactions with them. Try commenting on an activity yourself instead of probing with questions. Allow your child to lead the conversation and to lead during play.

- **Repeat and rephrase**

Repeat and rephrase easily and at a slightly slower rate **both** fluent and stuttered speech to provide a model. Do this from time to time, not constantly. This lets your child know that you are listening and provides a model of smooth easy talking, proper articulation, and grammar. This also reduces the overall speed of the conversation.

- **Being a good listener**

Maintain eye contact with your child while listening to what they are saying versus how they are saying it. Allow your child time to finish what they are saying without interruptions. Other family members who do not stutter should be treated the same.

- **Lifestyle changes to be considered**

Plan plenty of time in order to provide your child with a comfortable pace to his/her day. Try not to overfill your child's schedule with too many activities. Allow for some one-to-one quality time daily where your child has your undivided attention. A brief regular time with each child in the family may be helpful.

- **Acceptance**

Responding to stuttering with acceptance, love, and ease is imperative. Children's self-esteem and self-acceptance are affected directly by their caregivers and those around them. Shame grows from the belief a child could develop that they are doing something wrong or that they are wrong or bad for stuttering. It is these negative beliefs and reactions that determine whether the child will be negatively impacted by their stuttering.