



**Stuttering as Verbal Diversity:
SLP Roles in Stutter-Affirming Therapy**

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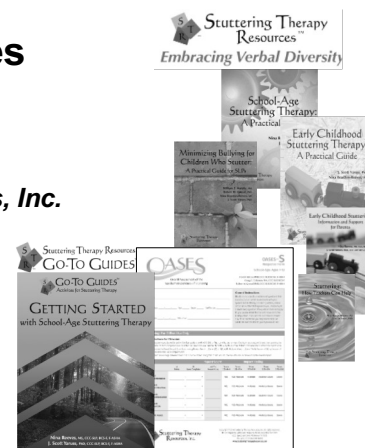
2026 FLASHA ANNUAL CONVENTION
WEST PALM BEACH, FL
JULY 9-11, 2026

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Today's Disclosures

- **Financial**
 - **Speaker's Stipend-FLASHA**
 - **Stuttering Therapy Resources, Inc.**
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HOUSEKEEPING---



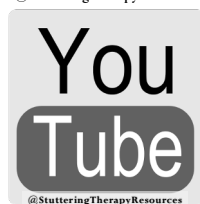
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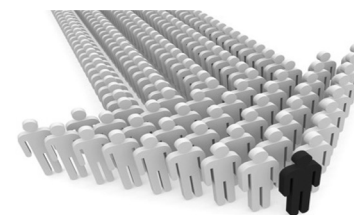


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Aligning Expectations

Today I will hope you can:

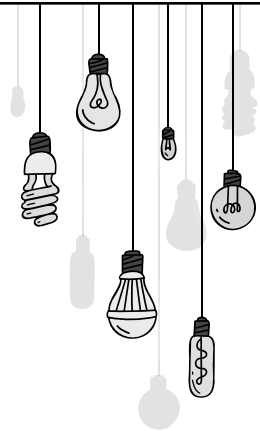
1. Borrow some of my experience
2. Let go of your perceived limitations for a few hours
3. Listen for the "nuances"



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- “ ÷ Keep your note-taking pen/tablet handy.
- ÷ As I work through these concepts with you today, I will throw out “bumper sticker” thoughts that summarize what you will want to consider your next steps!



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Inquiry #1:

What are you most afraid of when working with students who stutter and their families?



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SETTING THINGS UP...



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LET'S CALL THIS AN EMERGING AREA OF OUR CLINICAL PRACTICE!

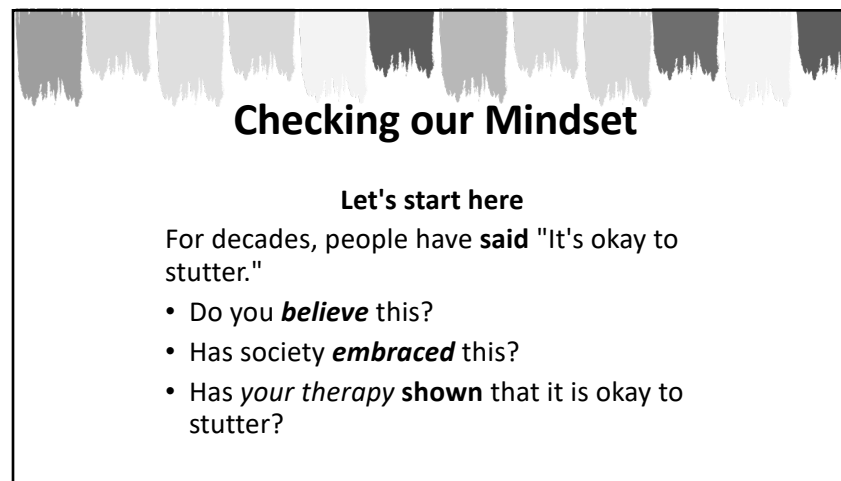
GRACE, PATIENCE, AND PERSISTENCE 🕶️



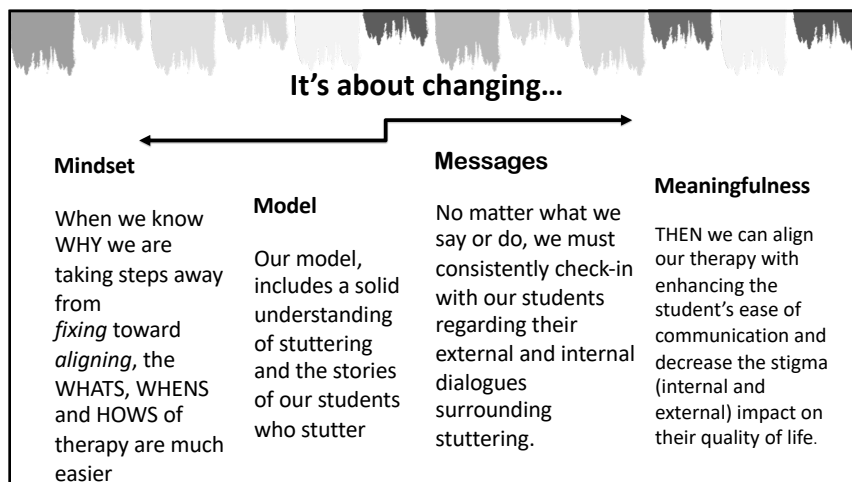
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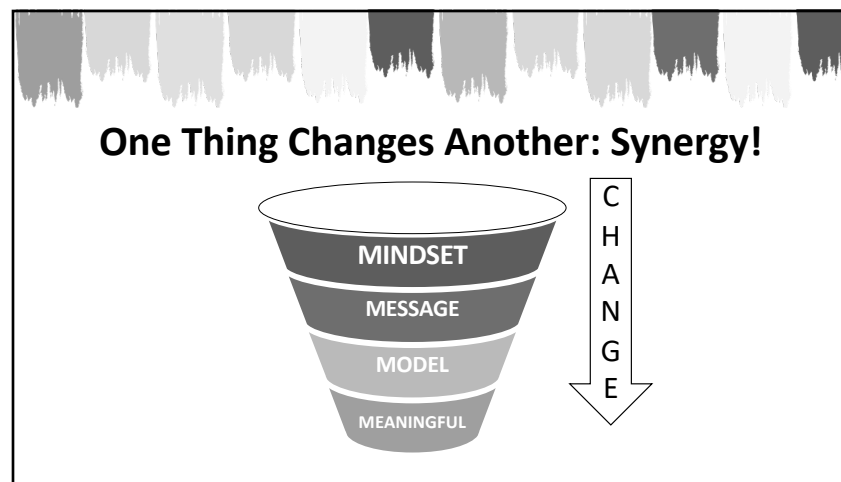
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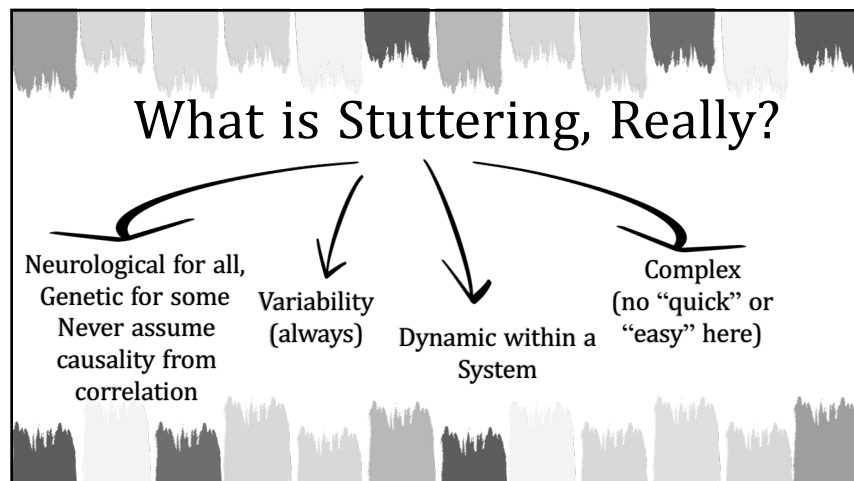
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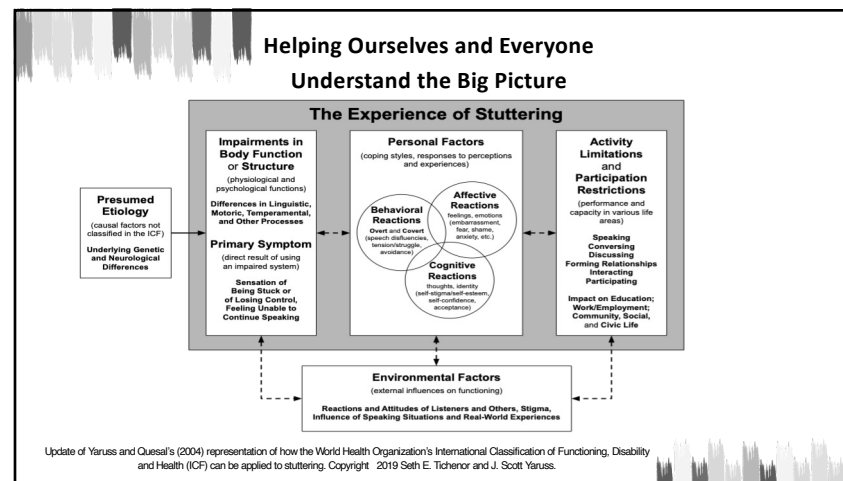
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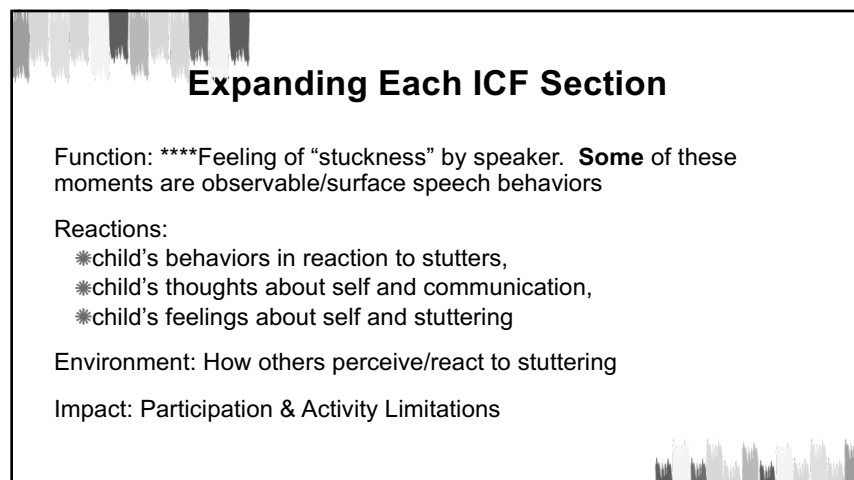
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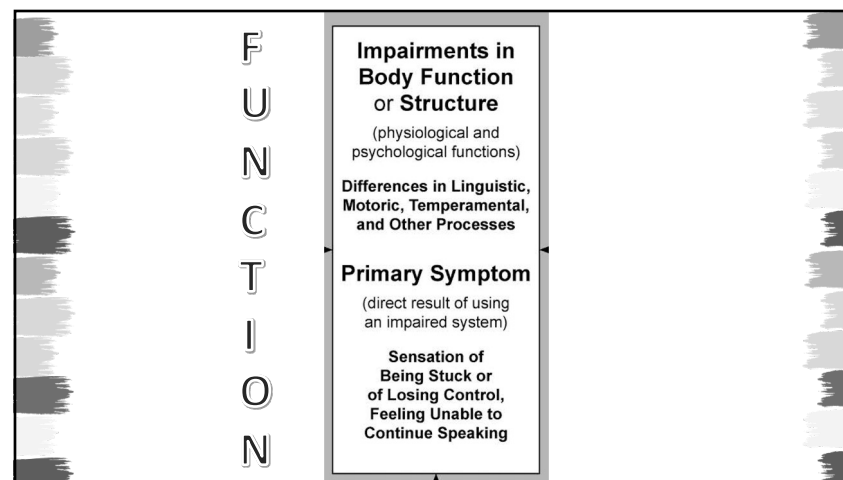
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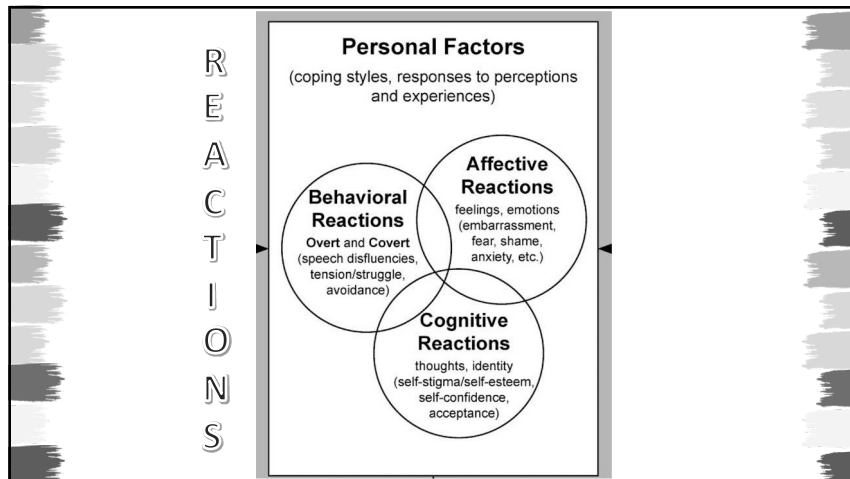
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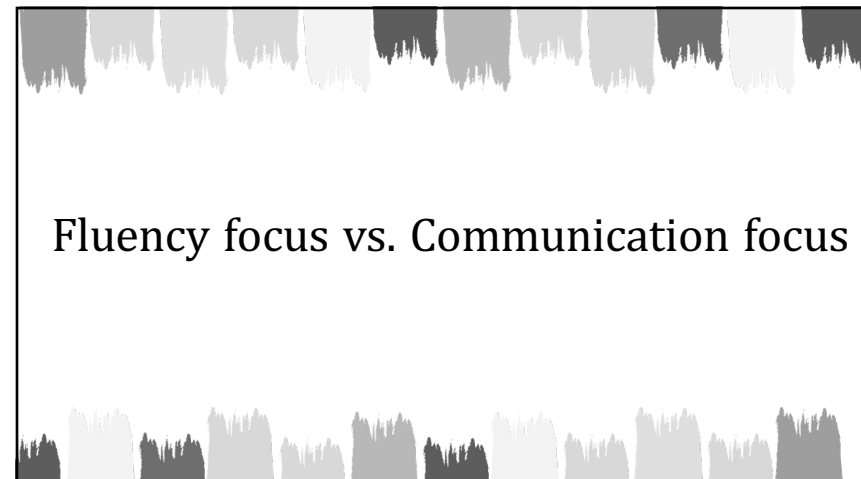
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Fluency-Focused vs. Neurodiversity-Affirming Stuttering Therapy

Fluency-Focused

- Is exactly what the name implies
- Leans toward fluency goals, skills, and activities
 - Have you ever noticed the number of times you- and others-use the term "fluency" from referral to dismissal?
- Is based on medical model "pathologizing" of stuttering

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Fluency-Focused vs. Stutter-Affirming Stuttering Therapy

Stutter-Affirming

- Understands that people who stutter have neurological differences when producing speech
- Leans toward goals, skills, and activities based on communication and quality of life for those who stutter
 - Do you use "the S word" when Speaking about therapy?
- Is based on social-relational models of acceptance and stutter-affirming practices

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Stigma-inducing messages masking as "help"

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
| ❑ You did so well! You didn't stutter once! | ❑ Don't worry, everybody stutters | ❑ Not calling on student in class |
| ❑ Try again and use your "tools" | ❑ You can be great in the chorus instead of taking that speaking part | ❑ Not having students involved in their own IEPs |
| ❑ I hardly notice you stutter; it's no big deal. | ❑ You just need a little confidence | ❑ Leaving "doesn't present in class" on IEP for WAY too long |
| ❑ No need to be nervous, just relax | ❑ Don't be scared, we worked on this in therapy | |
| ❑ If you <i>just</i> ... | | |
| ❑ <i>It's OK</i> ...take your time and try again | | ❑ OTHERS YOU CAN THINK OF? |

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Imagine This...

**Stuttering is
*Verbal Diversity***

-Nina Reeves, 11/6/2020

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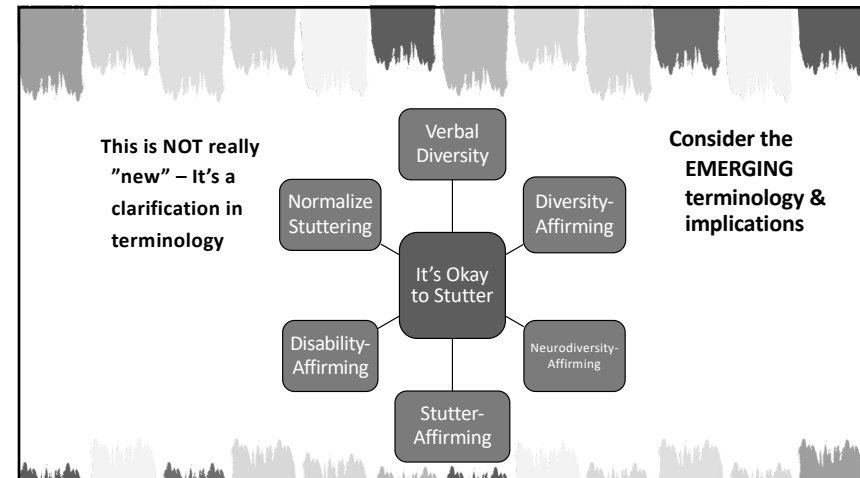
Why Stutter-Affirming Therapy?



- The more a student tries **not** to stutter, the more likely they are to (struggle and) stutter
- Focusing on **communication** rather than fluency can decrease struggle and increase ease of communication...

...while also decreasing internalized stigma, and increasing joy and spontaneity in communication

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ASHA LSHSS

Clinical Focus

Ableism to Empowerment: Navigating School Structures When Working With Students Who Stutter

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ARTICLE INFO

Article History:
Received February 16, 2022
Revision received May 22, 2022
Accepted October 6, 2022

Editor-in-Chief: Amanda J. O'Connell
Editor: Hope Gerlach-Hewitt

<https://doi.org/10.1044/2022.1.58109.22.00026>

ABSTRACT

Purpose: School-based speech-language pathologists (SLPs) face uniquely complex challenges of guidelines and criteria that can undermine their ability to move from fluency-based to disability-affirming practices. The purpose of this clinical focus article is to present a contrast between ableist and disability-affirming practices in school-based stuttering therapy while highlighting the critical perspectives of students who stutter. Practical examples of disability-affirming stuttering therapy in public school settings are provided.

Conclusions: This clinical focus article outlines practical guidelines and specific accommodations for students who stutter. These discussions demonstrate how SLPs can adopt updated assessment, therapy planning and institutional practices to affirm students who stutter while informing school cultures and society about the dignity and value of stuttered voices.

Supplemental Materials: <https://doi.org/10.23641/asha.21818028>

An entire LSHSS Forum on Ableism/Public Schools...
Stuttering and Autism
LSHSS Jan 2023

Read this issue NOW!

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Top 8 things NOT to say to a person who stutters...
That everyone says to people who stutter

"Stop

Slow Down,

Start Over,

Take a Deep
Breath,

Think about
what you
want to say,

Just...Relax,

Everybody
Stutters,

Use your
tools!"

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No More Fluency Focus

Do you write "% of fluency" in your goals?

- WHY?
- Is this promoting masking?

What is the % chosen?

- WHY?
- Who says?

How is the child "achieving" that %tage?

- Manage? Spontaneous? Avoidance?

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Let's Take a Moment

How do you feel about
NOT focusing on skills (as
much) in therapy?



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-CONTINUING TO ENHANCE OUR KNOWLEDGE-

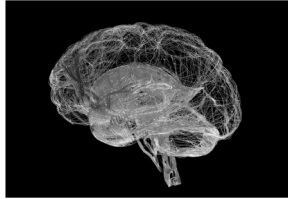
4 FACTS THAT NEVER FAIL



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1. Neurology

- Complex interaction of a variety of factors related to child's development
- **The origin of stuttering is genetic for some, and NEUROLOGICAL for ALL**



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2. Variability

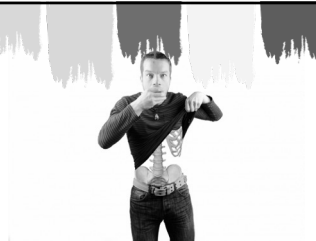
- **Finish this sentence -**
- **“The only consistent thing about stuttering is that it is...”**



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3. System

- **Every part of our system impacts every other part...**



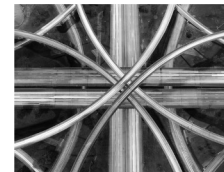
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4. Complexity

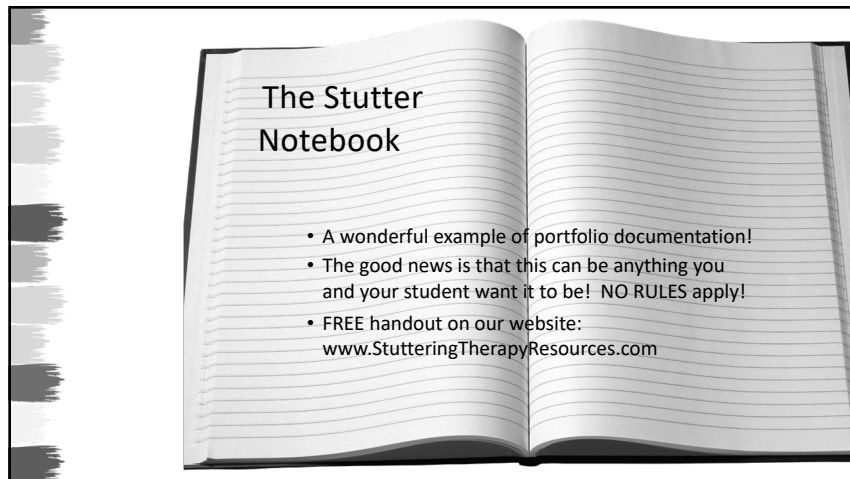
As you can imagine given the understanding of neurology, variability, and system factors

—
Stuttering is Complex
so therapy is complex!

It **CAN** be successful, but
there are no quick-fixes



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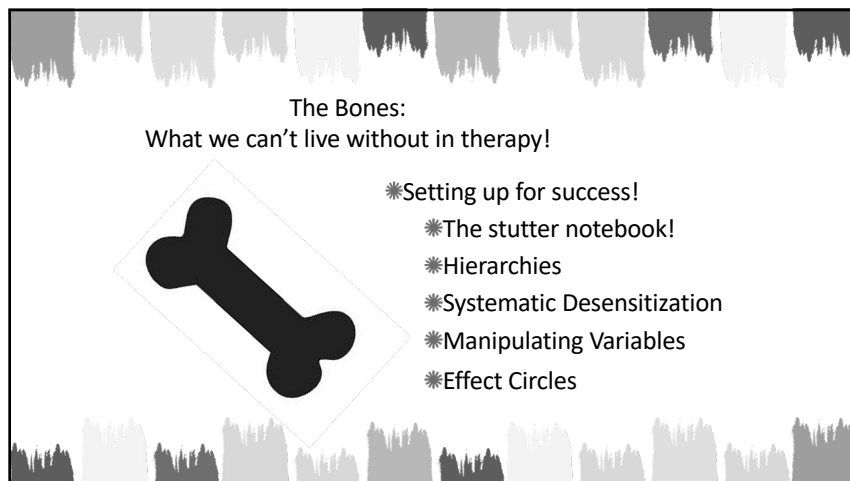


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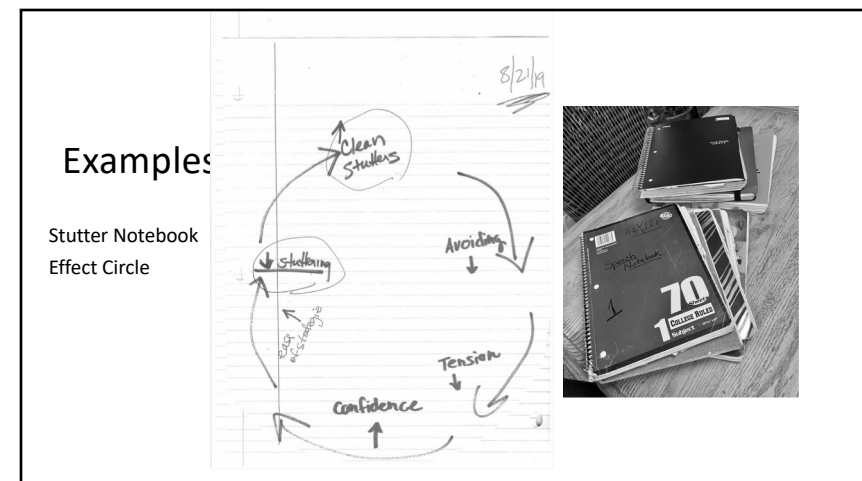
BEFORE we move into handling speech and stuttering with skills...let's review

- ✳️ Foundational knowledge and skills at the appropriate level for the child's:
 - Learning about speech (and tight/loose muscles)
 - Learning about stuttering
 - Teaching others about stuttering
 - Remember: we are not here to MAKE children aware of their stuttering so we can FIX them!
 - Skills: MAP IT OUT!
 - Seeing the "bigger picture"
 - Understand: There CAN, should, and WILL be homework! 🤔
- ✳️ Age
- ✳️ Awareness
- ✳️ Cognitive ability
- ✳️ Readiness
- ✳️ Level of Impact

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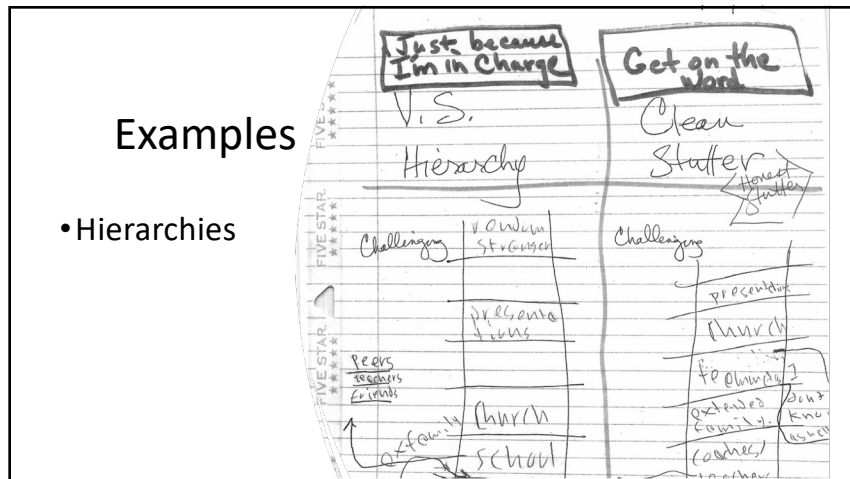


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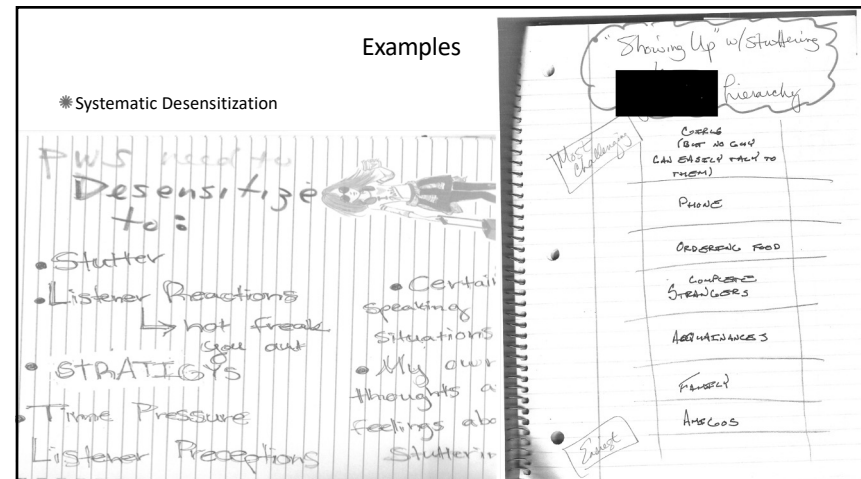
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- Hierarchies



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☀ Systematic Desensitization



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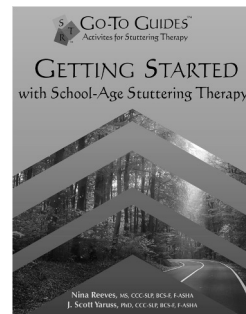


School-Age
Stuttering Therapy:
A Practical Guide

In Revision

Nina Reardon-Reeves, MS
J. Scott Yaruss, PhD

 Stuttering Therapy
Resource®



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- When in doubt, *refer out!*
 - SOME things are beyond our scope of practice
 - But feelings and experience related to communication differences are NOT beyond our scope of practice...they are OUR responsibility!
- Beware of “projection” by self or others
- What does “acceptance” mean?
- How can SLP help?
 - Desensitization
 - Cognitive restructuring (CBT)
 - Acceptance & Commitment Therapy (ACT)
 - Openness
 - Disclosure
 - Self-regulation/emotions

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How to involve caregivers and others



Discuss: thoughts and feelings drive behavior

No right or wrong, just “tune-in”

Explore interaction of caregivers and child

■ Handouts are available on our website

Explore Stuttering

- Build knowledge
- Watch videos
- Discuss Iceberg
- Have them create an iceberg of their own
- Discuss child’s iceberg

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Giving time for...

Information to be absorbed	Acknowledging painful feelings	Wondering about future implications
Denial as a crisis of confidence • Our support is crucial here	Caregivers as the ROUTE of successful outcomes • No matter how they “seem” right now • SLP trust in the process	“Time, compassion, encouragement”

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Let’s Take a Moment

Do you have confusion on eligibility?
If so, shout it out!



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WHERE DO THE COMMUNICATION SKILLS (TECHNIQUES) FIT IN?

Use the ICF to remind us:
Speaking skills are only **ONE** aspect of stuttering therapy

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Speaking Skills - - Stutter-Affirming **changes** in therapy practices

1. Intent
2. Focus (time spent in therapy)
3. Expectation

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Speaking & Communication Skills for School-Age Stuttering Therapy

Communication Skills

Including...

- Handling Time Pressure
- Turn-Taking

Stuttering More Confidently:

Honest/Clean
Stuttering
Voluntary
Stuttering

Stuttering More Easily: *Stuttering Modification*

Pullout
Cancellation
Preparatory Set

Handling Speech

(not your gramma's)
Easy Onset
Pausing/
Phrasing

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"Any skill introduced with the intent
to help children "not stutter"
[stutter less, stutter less noticeably]
will likely become an avoidance and
contribute to concealment and
masking...leading to increased
negative impact on communication
and quality of life."

Nina Reeves

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WHAT ABOUT GOAL CHOICE?
AKA: GIVE US A GOAL BANK!

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WHY DO YOU
THINK I LEFT THE
TOPIC OF GOALS
UNTIL LAST?



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Thoughts on Goals

Not every child needs every goal!

Not all goals presented at the same time

No "SET" order to goals

Each "subset" of goals works together

•ABCs

NO "levels of fluency" are to be included... (pop quiz: "why?")

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Goals based on the ICF model



What is the "ICF Model?"
...and how does it relate to the field of Speech-Language Pathology?

Sep 17, 2021

The ICF Model and how it relates to stuttering

Here is another blog you have been

Stuttering Therapy Resources

Practical Tip:

How do we write measurable treatment goals for school-age children who stutter?
Writing treatment goals is a fundamental aspect of clinical practice, especially for speech-language pathologists who work in the schools. Unfortunately, many clinicians have expressed uncertainty about how to write appropriate, measurable, and objective goals for their students who stutter.

Treatment goals should reflect what we actually do in treatment. For school-age children who stutter, treatment typically involves for more than just working on speech fluency. Therefore, treatment goals should also address more than just changes in observable speech behavior. This is where the challenge typically arises: while clinicians may be relatively comfortable writing goals about the more observable aspects of therapy (e.g., using speaking strategies to enhance fluency), they may be less clear about how to write goals for addressing children's negative reactions to stuttering or other less tangible aspects of treatment. (We can't write a goal that says, "Child will feel better about himself 80% of the time!")

Still, it is very important to write treatment goals for all aspects of therapy.

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Why don't we write goals about fluency?
DEC 01, 2018



Why don't we write goals about fluency? (Round 2)
APR 01, 2019



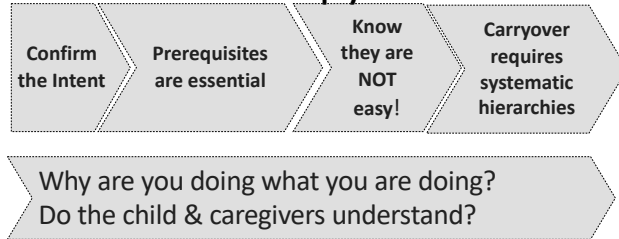
Nov 19, 2024

Caregivers want me to work on fluency. What do I say?

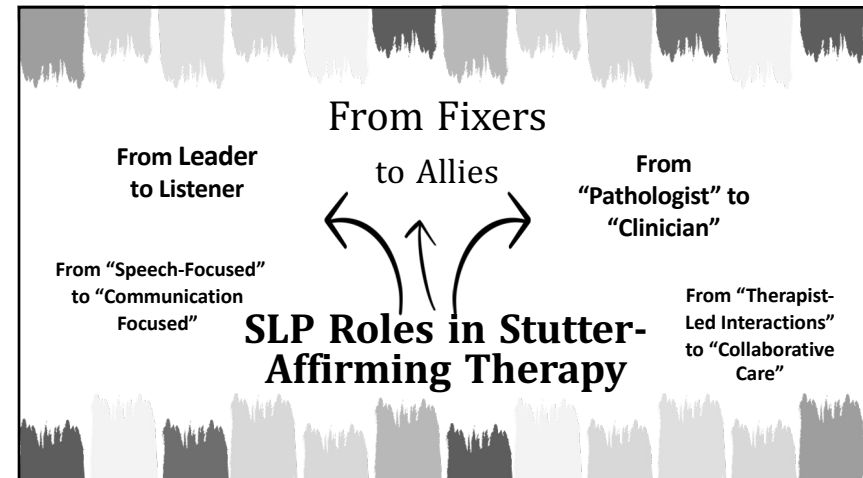
-by SRE's Dr. J. Scott Yaruss Many parents and caregivers contact speech therapists

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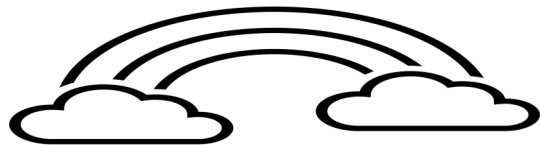
Realizing a Pathway to Success with ANY skills in therapy



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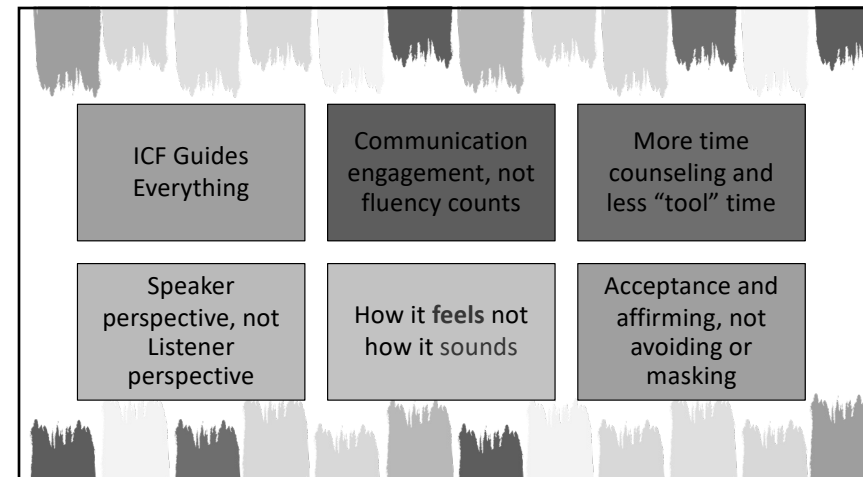


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Summing up: Overarching change

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Added Value
Exclusive Discount
for today's participants



Ends 11:59 PM ET
Monday,
July 15th, 202

CODE: FLASHA

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Thank you!



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