**GUIDELINES FOR TALKING ABOUT STAMMERING**

**Facts**

* A stammer isn't a weakness or a defect. It is just a stammer.
* People don't stammer because they're not breathing properly or doing anything wrong. Stammering is neurological.
* People don't stammer because they're nervous. If they do appear nervous, it's likely because they've repeatedly been laughed at for how they talk.
* People can learn strategies to manage and perhaps reduce the stammer, but there is no cure.
* Stammering doesn't tell you anything about how competent or intelligent someone is.
* Stammering isn't always obvious. Many people might avoid words or situations if they anticipate negative responses to their stammer.
* Some of our best orators, actors, writers and poets stammer. You can be disfluent and articulate.
* People don't 'grow out of' their stammer. Some stammer throughout their lives, others don't.
* Some might work on increasing their fluency or easing the struggle to speak. Others are happy to stammer openly. Some might do both depending on the situation.

**Find the right words**

* Instead of saying people 'suffer from' or are 'afflicted by' stammering, say 'they stammer'.
* Instead of describing someone's stammer as 'terrible' or 'debilitating', say 'they stammer'.
* Avoid saying that people 'defeat' or 'overcome' their stammer. It can't be cured.
* Find a word other than 'stuttering' to describe something that is stalling or failing.
* Avoid describing someone's stammer as 'really bad today'. They are just talking.

**Helpful responses**

If you're interviewing, casting, talking or working with someone who stammers:

* Let them finish their sentences without interruption.
* Avoid describing someone's stammer as 'really bad today'. They are just talking.
* Give the occasional nod to show them you're listening. Don't congratulate them on their fluency. It reinforces the notion that their natural voice is wrong.
* Don't make a joke when someone stammers. Don't pity them either.

**The best thing you can do is welcome and embrace stammered voices.**