

# INCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

## MAKING SPACE FOR STAMMERING



### Interviews and Stammering: What You Should Know

Typical interview practices can be unfair to people who stammer. They can stop the person from showing you how skilled or smart they are. However, with some small changes, interviews can be fairer and help you find the best person for the job or role.

#### Misunderstanding Stammering

Fluent speakers sometimes don't 'get' stammering and mistake it for nervousness or being unsure of what you want to say. But stammering doesn't mean any of those things. And it doesn't mean someone is less capable or less well-prepared either. It just means that they stammer. It's how they talk. People who stammer can do all kinds of jobs, including those that need strong verbal communication skills.

*"I feel confident going into the interview. I am excited that I will have the opportunity to demonstrate my knowledge and skills on a level playing ground. Hopefully, I will be able to do that to the best of my ability."*

#### What is Stammering?

Stammering is associated with differences in the way the brain works. At least 1 in 100 adults stammer, so it's fairly common. People who stammer might repeat, elongate, or get stuck on sounds or words when they speak. You might see signs of physical effort as they work to push out a word. Or they might look away from you when they are concentrating on speaking. Some people try to hide their stammer, so it might not be as obvious. There can still be a lot going on internally, perhaps finding different words to say what they want to say or saying less than they really want to. Stammering isn't

*"I could feel the difference in the room when they had the information about stammering in advance. It felt so much better."*

caused by being nervous, but it's common for people who stammer to stammer more when they are stressed. Because interviews are naturally stressful, many people who stammer might be stammering more during interviews.

# 5 TIPS FOR INTERVIEWING PEOPLE WHO STAMMER

1

## **Learn About Stammering**

Research shows that many interviewers unfairly rate someone who stammers lower than a fluent speaker. Knowing more about stammering can help you focus on the person's skills, rather than being influenced by the fact that they stammer.

2

## **Make Space for Stammering**

Give the person space to stammer without interrupting or finishing their sentences for them (unless they ask you to).

3

## **Rethink Introductions**

Many people who stammer find saying their name during introductions hard and icebreakers nightmarish. Be flexible with how introductions are done, so everyone feels comfortable.

4

## **Avoid Time Pressure**

When strict time limits are imposed, people who stammer may not get the chance to say as much as other candidates. Give extra time where appropriate so they can answer questions fully.

5

## **Allow Flexible Responses**

Stammering can take a lot of energy, so give candidates time to prepare. Let them write notes before responding or switch between speaking and writing if that helps them answer questions fully.

## **Strengths of People Who Stammer**

People who stammer have the same range of skills as everyone else. Many are brilliant, interesting and memorable speakers. Many develop large vocabularies because they find different ways to say what they mean. Many are good listeners and more likely to understand and accept others' differences. And living in a fast-paced world that doesn't always understand stammering, can mean people become determined and resilient. All of this can benefit an organisation.

*For further information and support on interviewing candidates who stammer, please contact [employmentsupport@stamma.org](mailto:employmentsupport@stamma.org) or call our helpline on 0808 802 0002 and request a callback from a member of the employment team.*

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**IT'S HOW WE TALK**