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Just Listen

Stammering Education CPDL

Information for Teachers

Humber Teaching Foundation Trust – Specialist Stammering Service in collaboration with Holderness Academy (part of The Consortium Academy Trust) and young people from Hull and East Yorkshire who stammer



Watch our Video

- Holderness Project Video



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Aims:

- To understand what disfluency/stammering/stuttering is
- To understand the difficulties a child who stammers may have at school
- To know how you can support children and young people so that your classrooms are safe spaces for those who stammer
- To raise awareness and encourage kindness and understanding among peers
- To reduce stigma



What is Stammering?

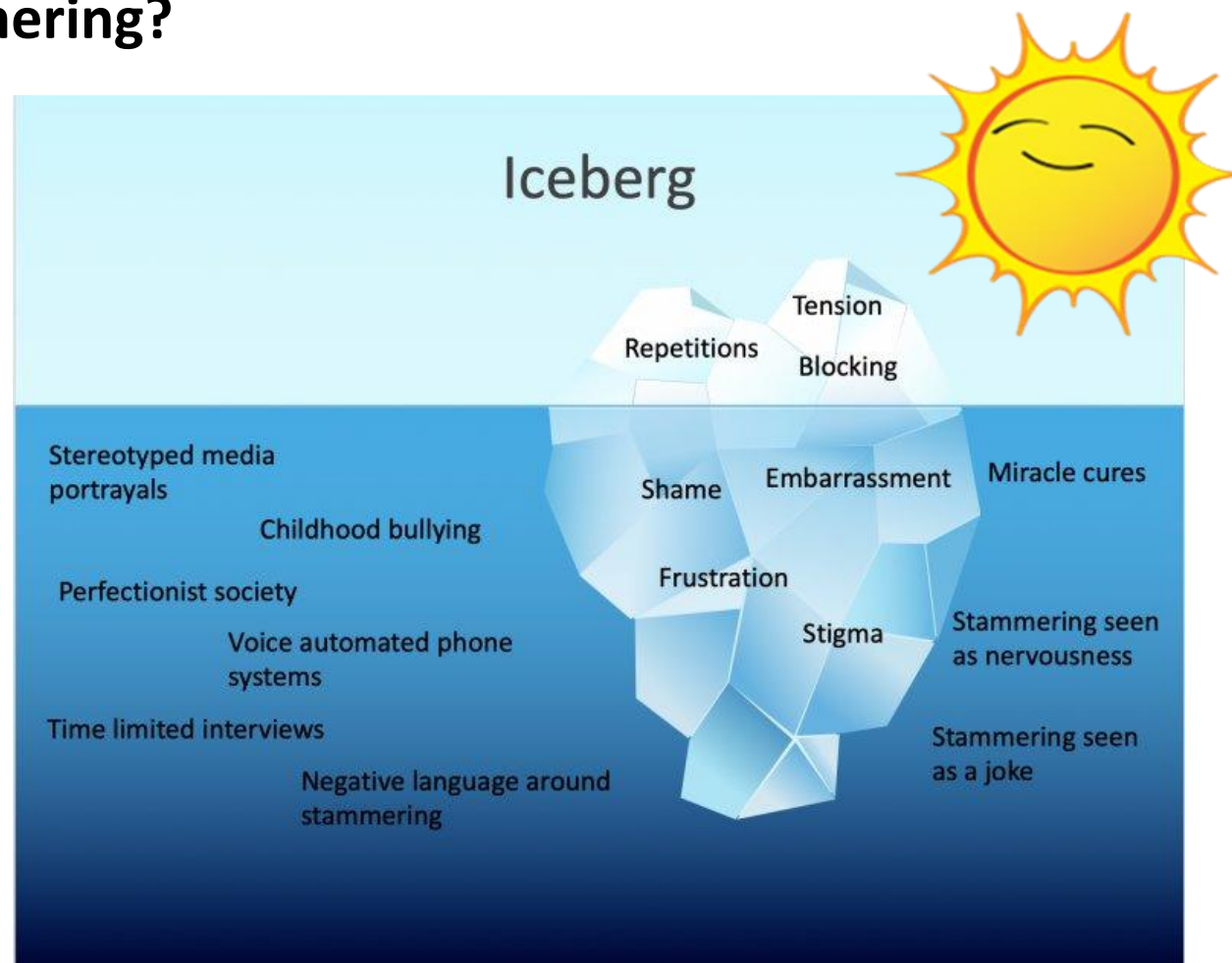
■ Stammering is more than just a speech issue

- It can affect every aspect of a person's life
- It should be understood both in the context of what may be heard by the listener, but more importantly by what is **experienced** by the speaker
- It is a speech difference which is characterised by involuntary interruptions in the physical production of speech which may be heard as repetitions, prolongations or blocks (no sound)
- It is experienced as a loss of control or a feeling of being stuck
- It has a neurological basis and is often genetic
- It is highly individual and extremely variable
- There is no cure for stammering



What is Stammering?

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Stigma

Stammering is still a stigmatised condition. Stammering is often used in films/ books/ TV to portray negative stereotypes or induce laughter. “Inspirational” portrayals of how people have “overcome” stammering feed into the ableist narrative that fluency is king. These portrayals reinforce stigma. As Joe Biden(a person who stammers) commented "stuttering is the only thing that **good** people think it's still okay to laugh about"



Stammering and Stigma

The impact of “ableism”

Definitions:

Stigma – A set of negative and often unfair beliefs that a society or group of people have about something.

Ableism – discrimination and social prejudice against people with physical or mental disabilities.



Credit- Willemijn @juststutter

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Stigma

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It is essential that schools have a zero tolerance towards unpleasant behaviours .

Be aware of unintended “micro aggressions” such as praising fluency

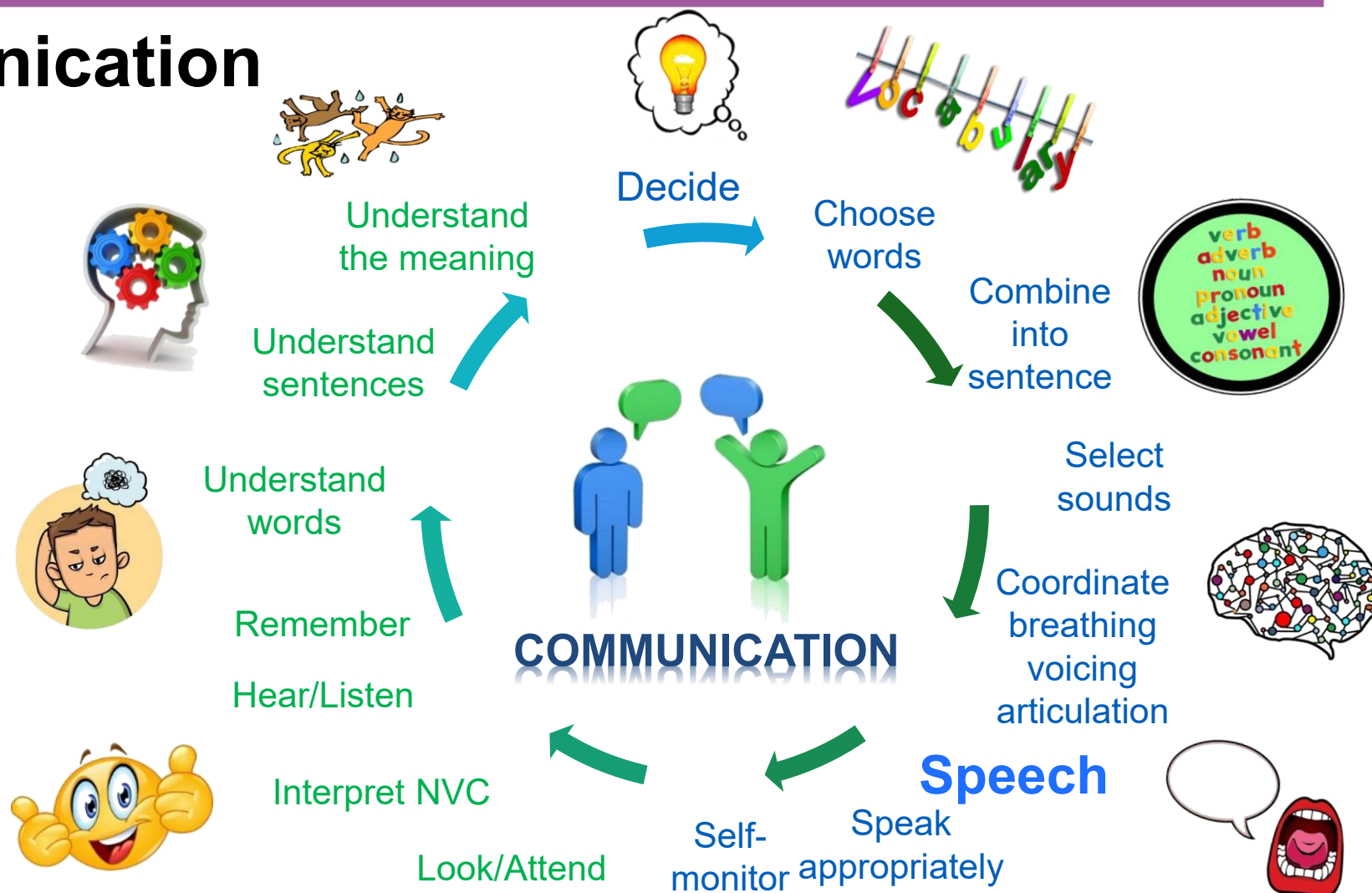
Use neutral language when talking about stammering

Teach students about the ‘bystander effect’ and model responses to any form of mocking.



Communication

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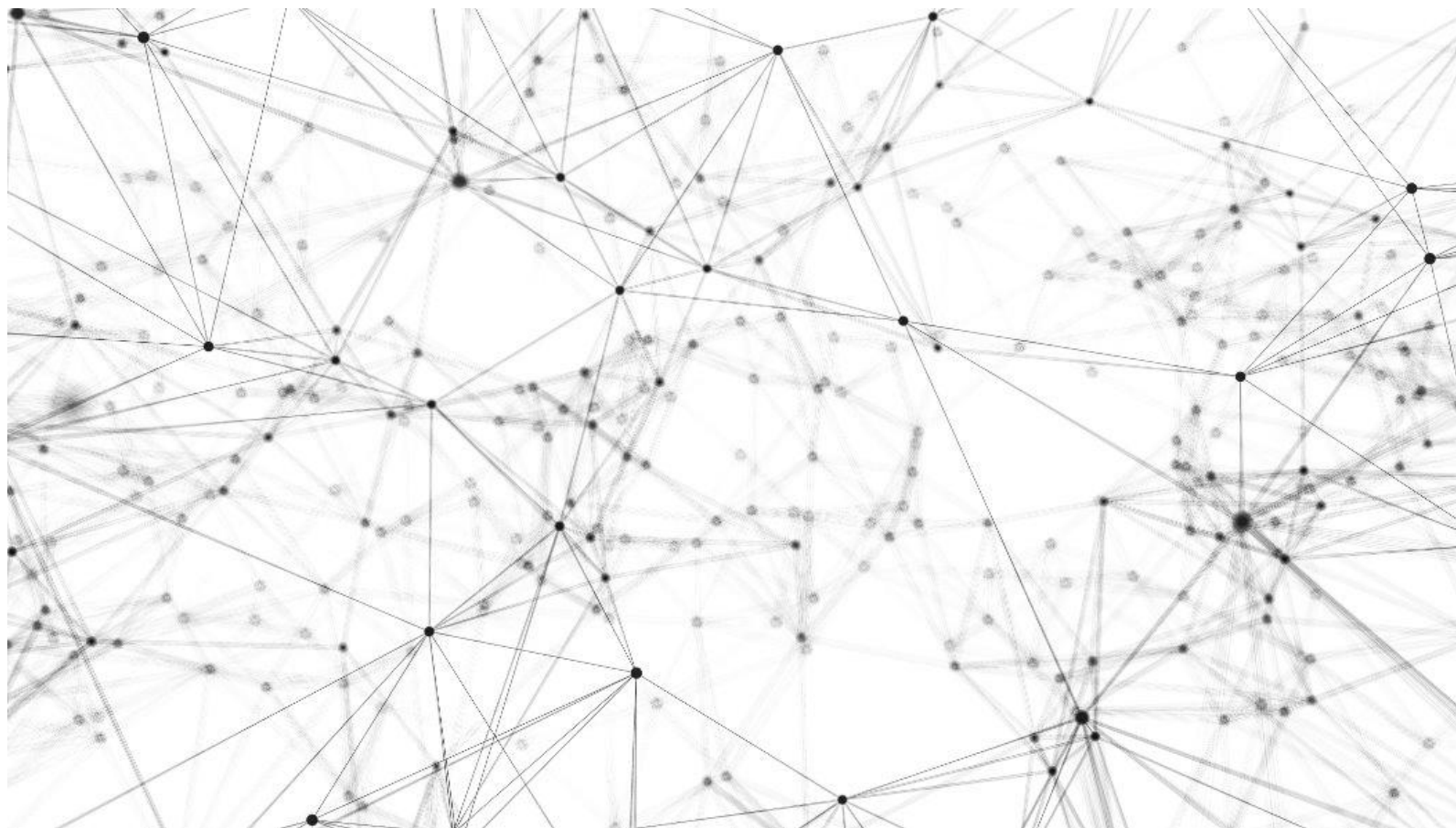


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Speech is complex!



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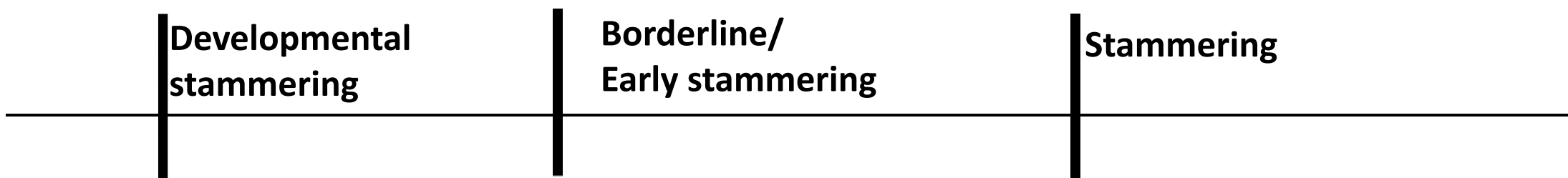
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- Video credit - Charlie Wiltshire
<https://youtu.be/Wrbe5fH888k?si=9O3711qRfbOSDb24>

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Stammering continuum



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Educational perspective

“ The group believes that language comes before literacy. Pupils can only progress through their academic studies if they are confident, they can communicate with those around them. Failure to communicate more particularly failure on the part of others to appreciate the nature and extent of a child’s communication difficulty can lead to frustration and poor self esteem. It can undermine the child’s confidence in his or her dealings with teachers and other pupils and can lead to isolation. It can also lead to deep unhappiness.

All these may find expression in behavioural difficulties ”

(Listen to conversation between a Teacher and a Speech and Language Therapist)



Educational Perspective

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“ If I have to
read out loud,
they will all
laugh at me

“ If I don't look at
the teacher I
won't be asked to
talk”



“Saying my
name was a
nightmare”

“ My panic
rose as my
turn to read
came closer”



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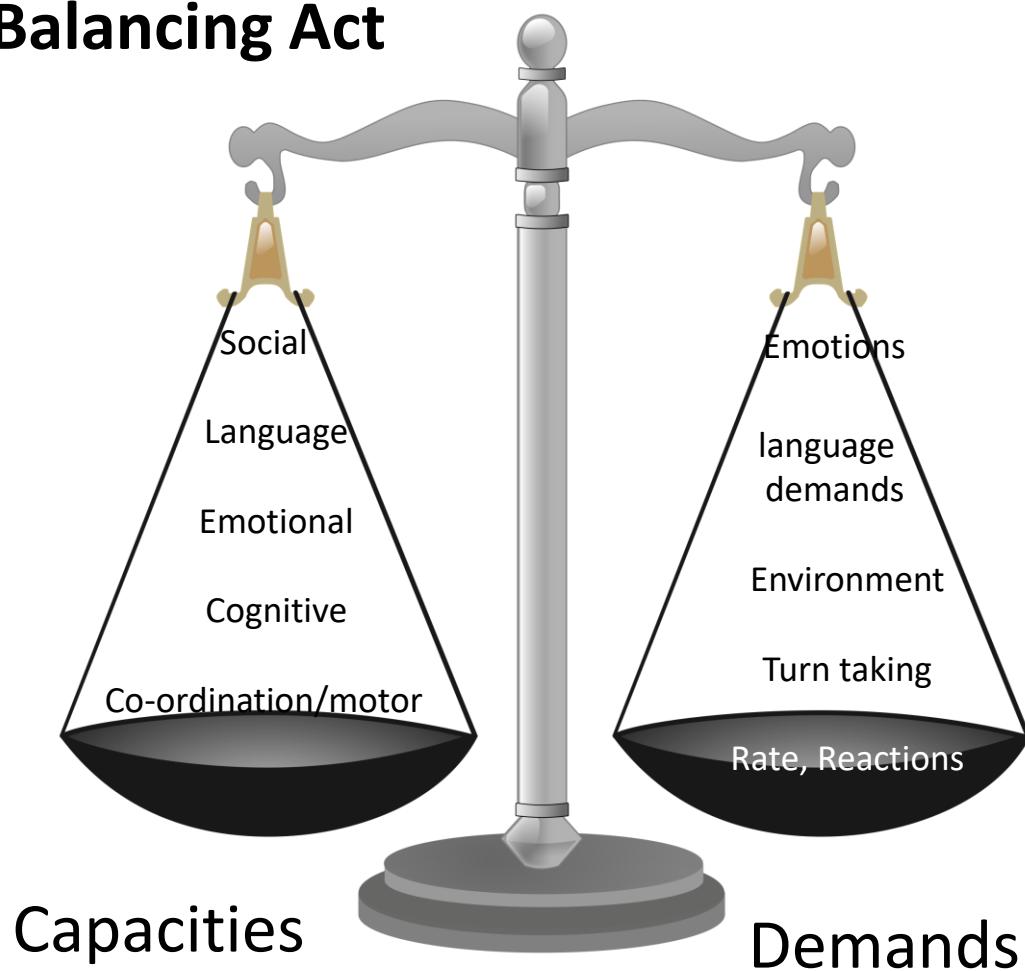
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Capacities and Demands-A Balancing Act

Stuttering/stammering results when demands for fluency from the child's social environment exceed their capacities for fluent speech.

C.Woodruff Starkweather
1990



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When do children stammer ?

More

- Tired
- Excited/upset
- A lot to say/complex ideas
- Competing to talk
- Rushing

Less

- Calm/ rested
- 1:1
- Confident
- Less complexity
- Taking time



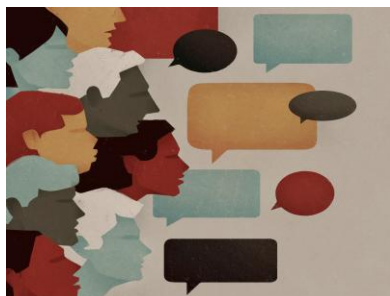
Reducing Demands

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Time Pressures

- Try and be calm and less 'hurried' during activities so that the child does not feel rushed.
- Show the child that you are listening to them. Maintain relaxed eye-contact.
- Wait for the child to finish speaking and avoid interrupting. If you are busy and not able to give a child your full attention when they're trying to tell you something, be honest with them and tell them you can't listen properly right now, but you'll make time to listen to what they want to tell you as soon as you can.



Talking Quickly

- Slow your own speech slightly when talking to the child – putting lots of pauses in while speaking or before responding is a helpful way of doing this. Children learn about talking from the way others around them speak. By slowing yourself down, you are helping the child to speak more slowly and giving them the message that there's no rush. It is **not** helpful to ask the child to slow down, but modelling slower speech yourself is helpful.



Complexity of Language

- With young children, keep your own language simple – use short simple sentences and reduce the number of questions you use. Children find it easier to process and respond to simpler language and will not be overstretching themselves to produce language which is too sophisticated for their abilities.



Challenging Situations

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Reading



Registration



Group work
Answering
questions



Challenging Situations

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Speaking
tests



Productions



Outside the
classroom



Reading



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WHY

- Words are fixed
- Focus of attention
- May not be confident reader

STRATEGIES

- Read in small groups or 1:1
- Read in unison
- Prepare the child
- Give them the choice to read or not



Registration

WHY

- Words are fixed
- Focus of attention
- Time pressure



STRATEGIES

- Abandon a formal procedure!
- Engage the children in other activities
- Change the order of names
- Give the child extra time

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Group work / Answering questions

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WHY?

- Focus of attention
- Time Pressure
- Need to know the answer



STRATEGIES

- Give the child time
- Listen/ wait
- Talk slowly
- Prepare the child in advance
- Ask on a 1:1 basis
- Focus on what the child's saying, not how they are talking



Speaking Tests

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WHY?

- Nerves
- Unprepared
- Pressure to do well
- Set script

STRATEGIES

- Exemption
- Rearrange task
- More time
- Preparation/Practise



Productions



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WHY?

- Nerves
- Focus of attention
- Set script

STRATEGIES

- Option to join in
- Non-speaking part
- Talking in unison
- Preparation/Practice



Outside the classroom



WHY?

- May be unfamiliar
- Unsure of reaction
- Time pressure

STRATEGIES

- inform others about the child's stammer
- how to help / accommodations in place



Reasonable adjustments

Stammering is protected by the Equalities Act 2010

- Talk to the child/ young person about what helps them. This will vary as stammering affects people differently
- Ensure that ALL staff are aware of the young person's preferences and that they are respected.
- Check in occasionally to make sure the child/ young person is still happy with their choices or if anything needs changing
- Contact exam boards to request reasonable adjustment if required.
- Ask the young person's Speech and Language Therapist to write a letter of support which can be used to request reasonable adjustments for public exams where there is an oral component
- Look at the STAMMA website for examples of Reasonable Adjustments [Stammering At School | STAMMA](#)

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REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS SUGGESTIONS FOR PUPILS WHO STAMMER

The aim of reasonable adjustments is to support a student in participating actively in all aspects of learning. As every person is different, the examples provided below are not exhaustive and will not all be relevant. But these are some ideas to get you started.

POSSIBLE CHALLENGES	SUGGESTIONS FOR ADJUSTMENTS
Registers & Introductions I find it hard to say my name on demand. I don't feel confident meeting new people. I get anxious about speaking if I have to wait my turn for a long time.	Be introduced rather than introduce myself. Agree in advance when registers or introductions are taken. Use name badges or allow all pupils to choose between speaking or writing their name.
Contributing in Class Sometimes I find speaking difficult or tiring. I'm reluctant to speak in class in case anyone reacts negatively when I stammer. It's sometimes difficult for me to talk quickly in a fast-paced discussion.	Stammered speech is welcomed and respected by the class. Turn-taking is managed well in class so there's space for me to get into the discussion The option to contribute in writing rather than speaking.
Oral Exams & Presentations I worry that I'll be judged on how I am speaking rather than what I'm saying. You want me to say key words, but I sometimes find a different way to explain something if I think I'm going to stammer on that word. The time limit doesn't allow enough time for me to stammer. Examiners might mistakenly think stammering means I'm unsure of the topic.	Stammered speech is welcomed and respected within presentations and oral exams. Extra time. Flexibility around presenting e.g. • Present with a friend or in a group • Use visual or written material as well as speaking • Pre-record my presentation on video rather than presenting it live. • Time limits removed Receive the questions early so I can plan how I want to deal with keywords that are hard to say when I stammer. The option to refer to notes. The option to use visual/written resources as well as speaking. The option to write down my responses and then read them aloud together with a peer or teacher.

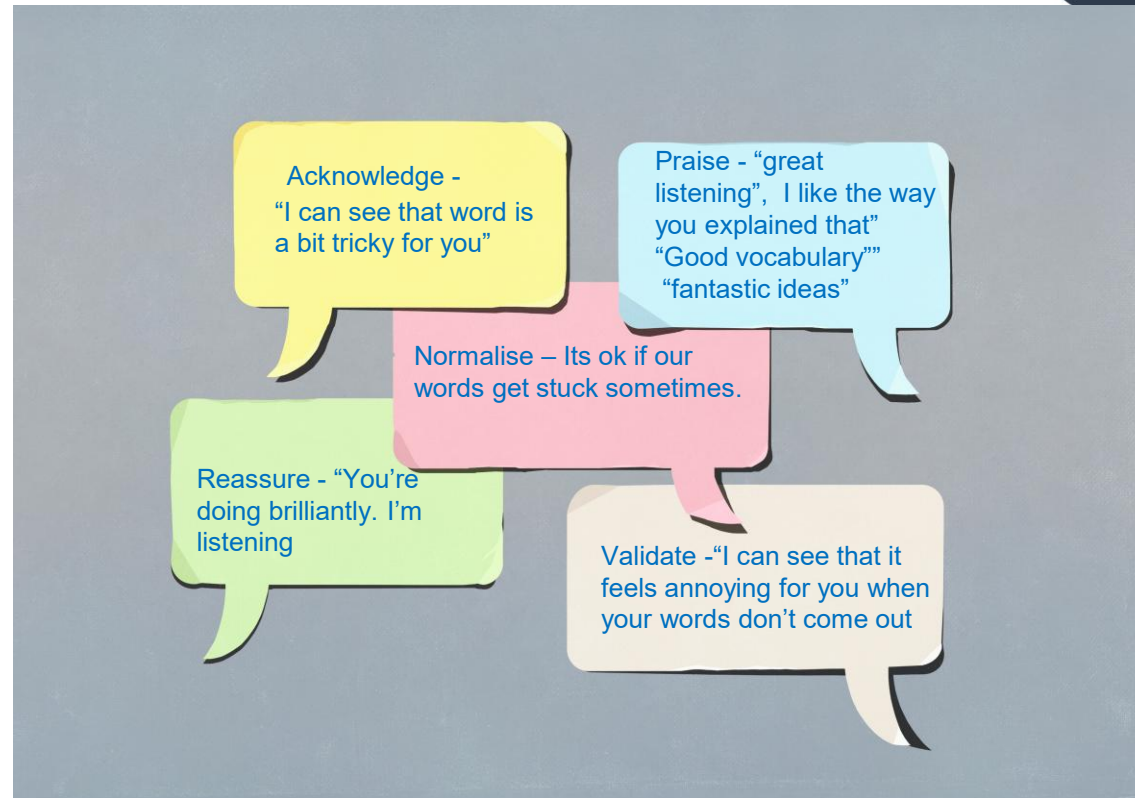
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Talking about Stammering

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People often fear that talking about stammering with a child will make them feel more self conscious. Many adults who stammer tell us that it felt like “the elephant in the room” and wished that someone had spoken to them about it when they were young. Children can feel reassured if stammering is talked about in an accepting and non- judgemental way. This can prevent anxiety about talking from building up.



International Stammering Awareness Day

October 22nd each year is an opportunity to celebrate the beauty and diversity of the stammering community worldwide. Schools can join in by raising awareness.

- Display posters / Stammering Pride flag
- Books in the library with positive representations of stammering
- Include stammering in discussions relating to inclusion / disability / differences
- Displays / activities to celebrate International Stammering Awareness Day
- Lessons based on books/ plays/ poetry / music featuring stammering
- Talks / Assemblies by people who stammer
- Watch videos made by people who stammer

Always include your students who stammer with planning any events and make sure they are comfortable with any proposed activities. Some students may not wish to present during events to raise awareness and their comfort should be respected.

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Resources

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Useful Websites:

- **STAMMA**
<https://stamma.org>
- **Action for Stammering Children**
<https://actionforstammeringchildren.org>
- **Humber Teaching NHS Foundation Trust**
<https://connect.humber.nhs.uk/service/childrens-speech-and-language-therapy/resources/speech-and-language/>



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Thank you for listening.

**Let's make all schools places where
we celebrate and value the beauty
of different voices, and children
who stammer can talk freely
without fear or judgement!**

