

GET HELP continued



WEBSITES

New Zealand Speak Easy Association:

www.speakeasynz.org.nz

(www.shopzone.co.nz/speakeasy)

AirFlow (NZSEA magazine) back issues:

homepages.ihug.co.nz/~rren

International Stuttering Association:

www.stutterISA.org

Stuttering Home Page:

www.stutteringhomepage.com

Australian SpeakEasy Association:

www.home.vicnet.net.au/~ausspeak

British Stammering Association:

www.stammering.org

National Stuttering Association (USA)

www.nsastutter.org

SpeakEasy Canada

www.speakeasycanada.com

What is SPEAK EASY?

SPEAK EASY is a self-help support association that exists to assist people who stutter.

The *NEW ZEALAND SPEAK EASY ASSOCIATION* is an Incorporated Society and a registered charity.

IT OFFERS:

- ✦ Group meetings in a supportive atmosphere for members to practice their fluency speech techniques.
- ✦ Education and provision of resources.
- ✦ Friendship, socializing, sharing and understanding of stuttering-related problems.
- ✦ A worldwide network of stuttering associations, giving you access to up-to-date research and information about stuttering treatments.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact: NZ SPEAK EASY ASSN INC.

A self-help support group for people who stutter with branches across NZ.

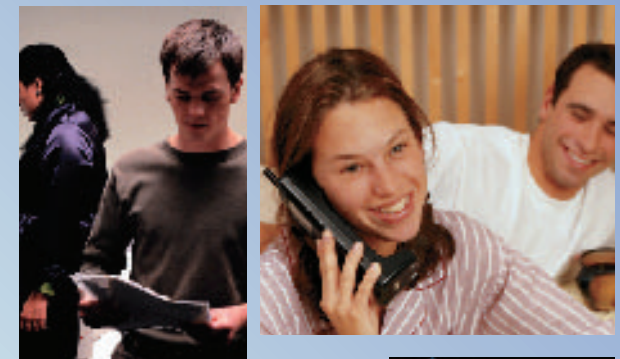
P.O.Box 16554, Hornby, Christchurch

CONTACT YOUR LOCAL BRANCH:



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Stuttering



SPEAKEASY
New Zealand Speak Easy Association Inc.

A support group for people who stutter.

Patron: Judge Andrew Becroft

WHAT IS STUTTERING?

Stuttering is a communication difficulty whereby a person is unable to verbally communicate in the way they want to, when they want to. The words stuttering and stammering refer to the same condition.

Stuttering is a complex set of behaviours, that may involve repeating sounds, syllables or words, prolonging sounds, blocking or hesitating and avoiding or substituting words.

The stutter is the attempt to break the block, allowing the air to flow over the vocal chords so the speaker can say the words.

Stuttering usually starts in childhood between the ages of 2 and 5.

About 5% of children under 5 will experience stuttering symptoms while learning to talk but only about a quarter of these children will go on to develop chronic stuttering.

Stuttering is more common in boys than in girls. The ratio is about 4-5:1 in favour of boys.

Stuttering varies in severity and frequency. For example, a child may be fluent for days or weeks at a time and then stuttering may reappear for a period. Adults commonly report "good" days and "bad" days.

People who stutter generally do not stutter when they sing, whisper, speak in chorus, or when they can't hear their own voice. There is no obvious explanation for this but a continuous controlled flow of air over the vocal chords is a possibility.

WHAT CAUSES STUTTERING?

There appears to be no definitive answer to this question yet. There are 3 main possibilities put forward by research:

- ✦ **Genetics.** If a member of the family stutters it increases the likelihood a child may stutter
- ✦ **Physical environment.** The opportunities available to the child to learn speech correctly.
- ✦ **Emotional environment.** The emotional stress of not being able to communicate fluently may promote the development of a stutter.

A person growing up with a stutter may feel embarrassment, discrimination and possibly experience rejection and ridicule. These fears can lead to a lack of self-esteem and less confidence. A person who stutters might appear shy, unintelligent or non-assertive. But none of these traits may be true of this person at all.

There is no difference intellectually or emotionally between those people who stutter and those who do not.

It is vitally important that the person does not come to believe that stuttering is a reason to withdraw from interacting with other people. The goal of the parent, caregiver or teacher then, is to help prevent negative emotions from becoming part of the child's stuttering experience. This means that even if the child doesn't speak fluently he or she can at least speak freely.

TREATMENT

For children, early intervention by a speech-language therapist is very beneficial. The earlier a stutter is identified and treatment started the better the outcome. For adults, treatment is more difficult because the habit patterns associated with stuttering have become more deeply ingrained. This is why Speech-Language Therapists talk about controlling the condition rather than curing it.

For adults, the first step is to accept responsibility for his/her own behaviour and for carrying out the changes that need to be made. Some attitudinal changes will need to be considered as well, such as a willingness to resist the temptation to hide or minimise stuttering by avoidance and a willingness to experiment with different methods and enter difficult speaking situations.

For adults, working on stuttering is usually a long-term undertaking requiring courage, commitment and self-acceptance. Becoming fluent, or just more confident, may be a liberating process bringing about greater independence, openness and confidence, all of which may change the dynamics of one's outlook on life.

WHERE CAN YOU GET HELP?

- ✦ Group Special Education Services employ speech-language therapists who work (free of charge) with people under 18. Contact them directly or through your local school.
- ✦ Speech Language Therapists also work in hospitals. If you are over 19 you may need a doctor's referral to access their help.
- ✦ Speech Language Therapists in private practice. You may be eligible for a disability allowance from WINZ.
- ✦ START (Stuttering Treatment and Research Trust), operate in Auckland and offers a range of treatment options for people of all ages.
- ✦ Some Universities have a Speech-Language Therapy Department and may run intensive fluency courses.
- ✦ Sometimes commercially-based treatment programmes are offered in New Zealand such as the Smooth Speech, Naturalness and the McGuire programme.
- ✦ Psychotherapy programmes. These focus on the underlying or contributing psychological issues.
- ✦ Other approaches which may prove helpful are courses in stress management, assertiveness training, confidence building, speech making (eg.Toastmasters).

If your child stutters.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO?

Show that you love your child.

Make eye contact and listen carefully and patiently to what your child is saying rather than how it is being said.

Respond kindly and non-critically when your child stutters.

Give your child time to say whatever he/she wants to say.

Don't help by saying or filling in words for your child.

Don't speak for your child in situations you think may embarrass your child, you, or others. It is worse for your child to have his/her power to communicate taken away altogether.

Examine and deal with your own feelings and wanting to pretend this is not happening. It is very hard to watch someone we care about having difficulty so you too may need to get help and support.

Talk to your child about stuttering. Do not make it a taboo subject because if you do it could be taken to mean that stuttering is wrong or shameful.

Remember that your child will tend to copy how you speak, so model a relaxed, unhurried and open manner of speech.

There is clear evidence that early intervention for children by a Speech Language Therapist works to overcome the stutter.