The Stuttering Foundation

A Nonprofit Organization | FALL 2025 | Since 1947... Helping Those Who Stutter

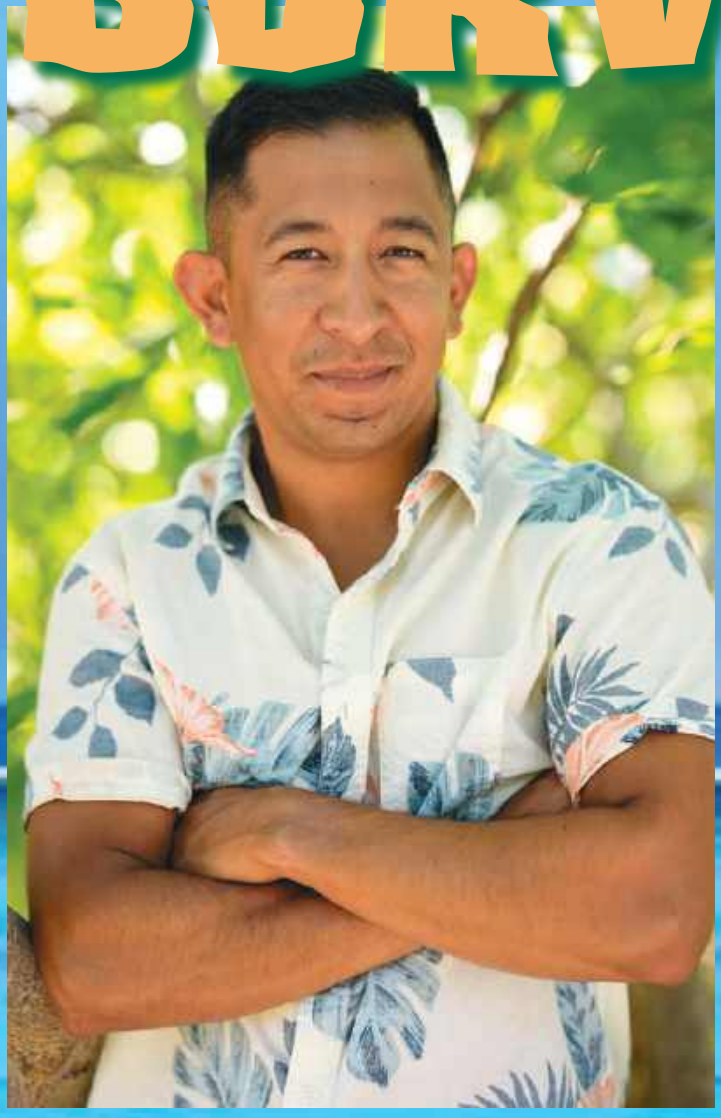
MEET MITCH GUERRA, STUTTERING ON

SURVIVOR

OUTWIT, OUTPLAY, OUTLAST:

MEET MITCH GUERRA, STUTTERING ON

SURVIVOR



Following is excerpted and adapted from the Stuttering Foundation Podcast [S7:E11] hosted by Sara MacIntyre, M.A., CCC-SLP. The text represents Mitch's spoken responses to Sara's questions. Use the QR below to listen to the full episode

I'm originally from Waco, Texas. My first memories as a person who stutters were probably in the first or second grade. I remember once or twice a week I would get pulled out of my home room class and I would go and work on speech therapy at my elementary school, but I didn't ever view it as something that was negative until I switched schools in the third grade.

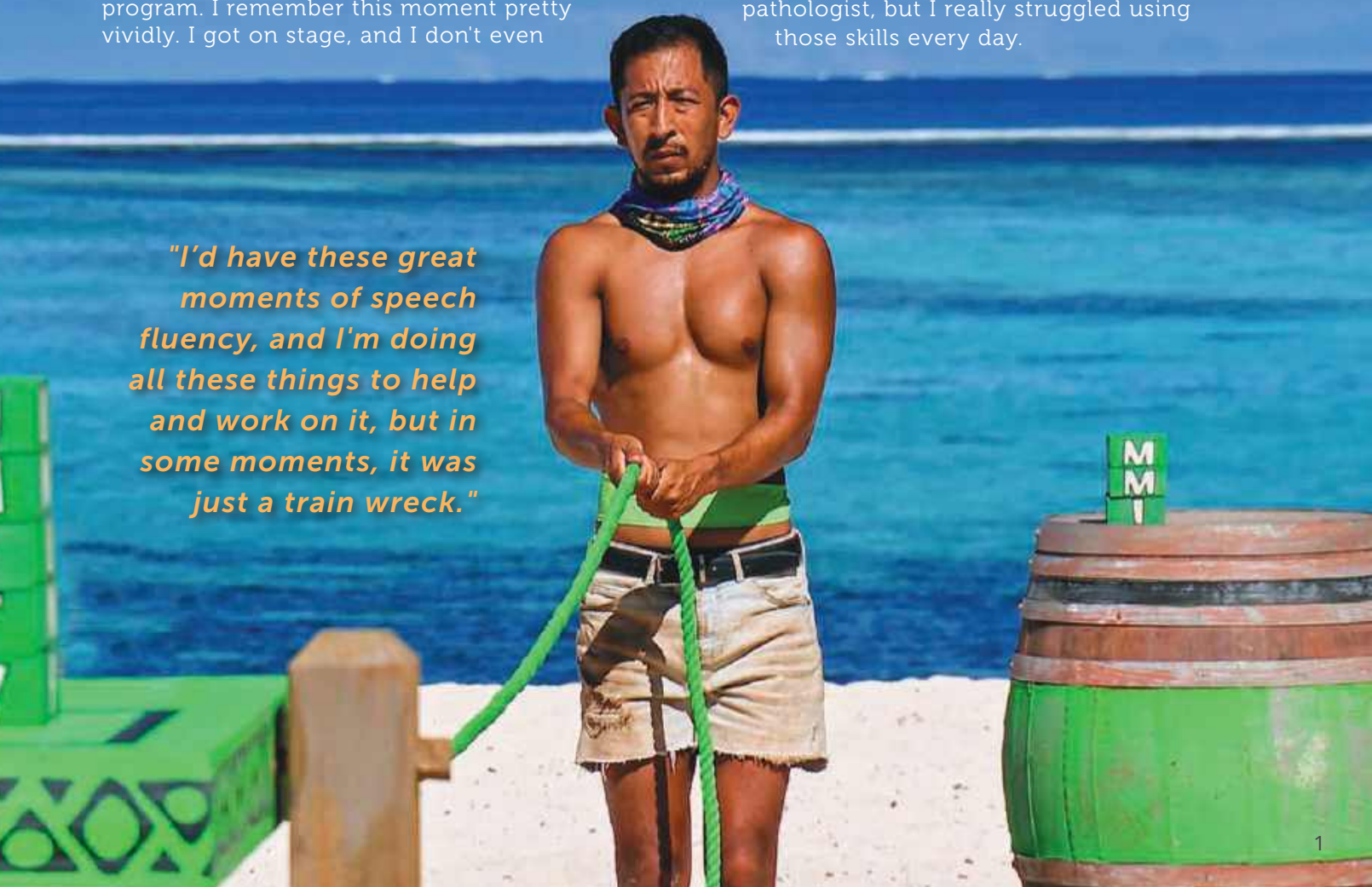
I was going to a brand-new school with people I didn't know at all and I think that was the first time that my speech impediment was viewed in a negative way. I started to get made fun of and had a harder time making friends. Because I was at a new school and because of how I spoke, I was different than everyone else. So as a kid, if you have something that makes you different, sometimes children just don't really know how to respond to it.

I remember being in the fourth grade and our music teacher, she made every single student in the 4th grade stand on stage in front of all of the students and try out for the school Christmas program. I remember this moment pretty vividly. I got on stage, and I don't even think I said anything for a couple of minutes. From that moment on, for the next few years, I got made fun of, pretty significantly. I remember a few days afterwards, somebody was riding me and making fun of me. One of the teachers found out and it was just this moment of me being like, well, dang. That was horrible. I literally have only been at this school for one year, and now everybody who's my peer has just seen me up here horribly struggling.

I think over the next few years in 5th and 6th grade, I felt like I really tried to be as joyful as possible, but I think internally I was hating it.

I tried to still speak up at school, but there were obviously some moments that were incredibly hard. The first few days of school are always really tough to introduce yourself to a bunch of new people. Once I got to middle school, I felt like I was becoming more confident in who I was and just trying to be as true to who I am. At that point, most people that I went to school with understood that I stuttered for the most part, so it became easier because I was pretty open about it.

I stopped going to speech therapy probably in the 5th or 6th grade. I was always really comfortable practicing speech strategies with our speech pathologist, but I really struggled using those skills every day.



"I'd have these great moments of speech fluency, and I'm doing all these things to help and work on it, but in some moments, it was just a train wreck."

So that was something super hard to work through. I'd have these great moments of speech fluency, and I'm doing all these things to help and work on it, but in some moments, it was just a train wreck.

In high school, my world geography teacher encouraged me to reach out to the speech program at Baylor University. So, over the next few years, I went to speech therapy there and just really had an incredible experience of being able to work on strategies and stuff but was able to practice using them outside of the normal speech setting. I think those SLPs just created an environment where I became really comfortable with who I was as a person who stutters. Once I got to high school, I was just a lot more comfortable and confident sharing my story as a person who stutters.

I had a pivotal experience that I remember that has stuck with me. I remember being 16 years old, and I went to ask this grocery store if they were hiring, because I heard they were. I walked up to one of the managers at the store, and I began asking if they were hiring. And as I was asking him those questions, I began to stutter. He looked me in the face and said they weren't hiring, which was super confusing because one of my good friends was an employee there. Then I walked back outside to head home and one of my buddies was with me and he was like 'there's no way they aren't hiring. They're hiring!' So, he went back inside and spoke with the same manager, and he hired him on the spot. It was just really frustrating because how I viewed it was 'man, like this person doesn't want to interview me because I'm a person who stutters' and I'm not exactly sure if that is it, but as a 16-year-old who is incredibly insecure, that is how I handled it. I was really upset about it for a couple of months, and it just finally got to a point where

"...it just finally got to the point where I was like, 'man, I cannot control how other people view me. But I'm going to continue to put myself out there because I know what I have to offer as a person and as an employee.'

I was like, 'man, I cannot control how other people view me. But I'm going to continue to put myself out there because I know what I have to offer as a person and as an employee.' So that was a pivotal moment of a really crappy experience that really motivated me to try and control how I viewed myself and wasn't so focused on what others thought of me.

After I graduated high school, I really wasn't sure what I wanted to do afterwards. So, I was at a community college for a year, and I ended up going and playing college tennis for a year which really pushed me out of my comfort zone in so many ways.

I ended up transferring to Texas A&M University and just the culture of being so friendly and welcoming really impacted me.

The people I met at A&M really encouraged me to be actively involved on campus. So I was in some organizations that really challenged me and pushed me because of the people that I surrounded myself with. I felt like I became who I am today because of the experiences I had during my time at Texas A&M. I became confident in sharing my story and interacting with other people and I started applying to go on Survivor.

WHY SURVIVOR?

I remember growing up and falling in love with this wild TV show that took everyday Americans and put them in uncomfortable situations where they had to build social relationships and do these insane challenges. I remember watching Survivor Amazon and there was a contestant named Christy Smith, who was deaf, and just seeing someone similar to me who had their own personal struggle and watching them work through this thing that many people view as an incredibly challenging disability.

Watching her work through this incredibly hard social game and make it really far was so encouraging and inspiring. From that moment on, I thought, 'well, here's someone with their own struggle getting to live out this crazy cool experience. Maybe one day I could too.'

THE JOURNEY TO REALITY TV

Starting in 2012, (I was 22 at that point,) I filled out an application and I didn't get a call back until maybe two years later. I got a call from one of the casting agents. I think during that time, they were casting for season 29 and 30. That was the second season of "Blood vs. Water" so I interviewed for that season with my dad and had some interviews, but ultimately it didn't end up going anywhere.

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WHAT *IS* STUTTERING?

A Close Look at the Actual Speech Disruptions

When following the current debates on stuttering, it seems clear that there is no general agreement about what stuttering actually 'is'—no agreement at all. Is stuttering, at its core, an active inhibition of attempts to talk, based on cognitive anticipation and negative emotions? Is stuttering the result of unstable steering of the speech movements, similar to an unstable driver of a car, finally ending up in the ditch? Or, should it not be considered as a disorder, but instead as a natural variation of human communication?

STUTTERING IS MORE THAN SPEECH—BUT ALSO SPEECH

"Stuttering is more than speech—it's an experience shaped by emotions, identity, and social interactions." Yes, absolutely! For many persons who stutter, these additional aspects may have grown to become the largest part, below the surface, as depicted in the traditional iceberg model of stuttering. However, when children begin to stutter, they are typically no more shy or anxious than other children (based on strong research data). Fundamentally, stuttering is diagnosed based on speech disruptions with certain characteristics. Stuttering is not inherently an iceberg; it rather starts off as a beach ball. Still, the central role of speech in our lives implies that such involuntary speech disruptions easily affect our social interaction, our emotions, and our self-esteem. In summary, while the problems of stuttering certainly are not limited to the actual speech motor disruptions, it is important not to forget that the speech motor disruptions are also a part of this condition—and there are reasons to argue that they are the most fundamental aspect, from which the other difficulties arise. It is essential to highlight the situation for people with hidden/covert stuttering as well as the situation for those who have severe problems of communication due to very frequent overt stuttering—that cannot be hidden. "One size does not fit all" is a motto to always keep in mind.

UNDERSTANDING THE DISRUPTIONS IN DETAIL

Despite the apparent centrality of the speech motor disruptions for the stuttering condition, relatively little research has focused on this aspect since the 1990s. Considering that the speech motor disruptions constitute the basis for a diagnosis, it is relevant to compare stuttering with established disorders of movement, whether involving speech or not. In neurology, the precise characterization of anomalous movements—known as motor phenomenology—is the foundation for understanding movement conditions. This is critical for accurate diagnosis, subtyping, and for generating hypotheses about underlying mechanisms and causes. In

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speech disorders such as stuttering, the motor characterization of the speech disruptions is particularly challenging for three reasons: (1) the relevant movements are largely hidden from view; (2) speech production involves a complex system of moving parts at multiple levels, with continuous interactions; and (3) the movements occur as a very rapid sequence.

RESEARCH PROJECT IN UPPSALA, SWEDEN

Stuttering events are typically categorized as repetitions, prolongations and blocks, but this is a labelling based on the sound, providing little information about what actually happens in the speech apparatus. For example, repetitions may occur from a multitude of causes. At Uppsala University, Sweden, we have been working with these issues since 2014, with development of methods and pilot studies for synchronized recording and analysis of stuttering events. This includes surface electromyography (EMG) of muscles related to the lips and on the tongue, endoscopic video of the vocal folds, electroglottography of phonation, formant analysis indicating tongue movements, and video of the face. Our qualitative and exploratory analysis has focused on in-depth understanding of specific instances of stuttering: What are the first indications that something goes wrong? What may be signs of reactions? In repetitions, the final completed attempt can be used as a template to compare with the disrupted attempts—what are the differences that might have resulted in the disruption and the restart? Overall, the analysis is an attempt to reconstruct the events in as much detail as possible.

RESULTS AND PROPOSALS FROM UPPSALA

A summary and overview of these initial studies in Uppsala was recently published (Alm et al., 2025, freely available). While these studies should be considered as preliminary, with a need for consolidation by further studies, they do provide information that may elucidate the nature of stuttering as a phenomenon. A large part of the article consisted of a comparison of the characteristics of stuttering (the phenomenology) with established movement disorders with characteristics that overlap with stuttering. This comparison also included the subjective experiences. For this comparison, we focused on two disorders: dystonia and motor block disorders. Dystonia is a condition characterized by dysregulated muscle tone, causing tense involuntary contractions. Motor block disorders typically affect automatized sequential movements: The movements are suddenly 'stuck', with a temporary inability to move forward to the next movement in the sequence. The most established motor block disorder is freezing of gait in Parkinson's disease. In freezing of gait, the experience is typically being described as "the feet being glued to the floor." Of particular interest is that both dystonia and motor block disorders often show variability and task specificity—the risk for symptoms depends on the type of movement, the context, the level of stress and time pressure, etc. Furthermore, both disorders are related to the basal ganglia, a structure central for automatized movements and being implicated also in stuttering.

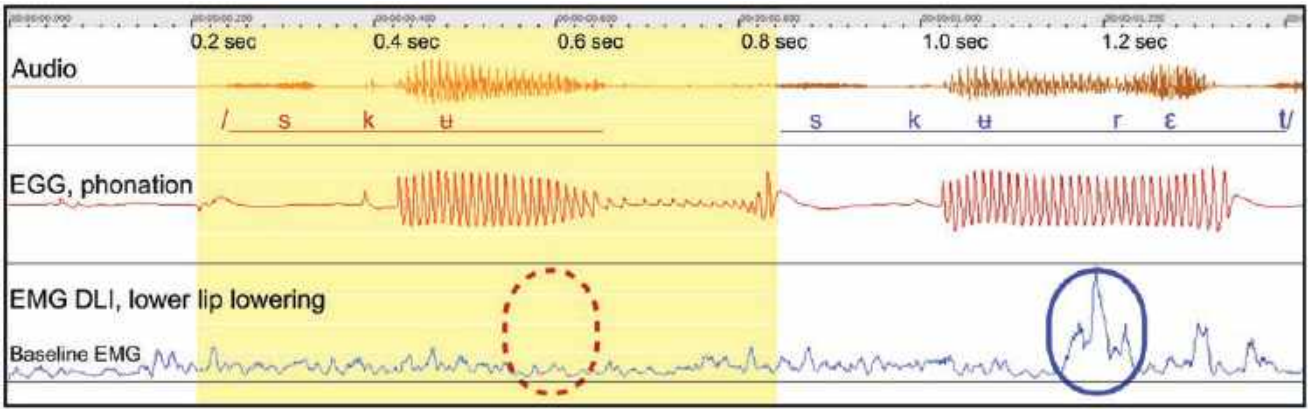

Figure. *Example showing a part-word repetition of the Swedish word 'skuret.' The blue marker (solid line) in the lower right shows the normal activity of a muscle opening of the lips after the /ū/ sound. The dashed red marker indicates the point of missing DLI activation in the disrupted attempt.*

In summary, the analysis of our data and the comparison with known movement disorders resulted in the following proposals:

1. Stuttering may be viewed as a "motor block disorder." The subjective and objective characteristics of stuttering largely align with the characteristics of motor block disorders. This suggests that the core aspect of stuttering may be a transient inability to activate the next speech movement—getting stuck in the present position, or stopping and restarting.

2. Reactions, tension, tremor, and physical concomitants. Fixed postures (motor blocks) tend to result in volitional attempts to break the posture and move forward. Such attempts (reactions) often result in elevated static muscular tension, that may elicit oscillatory (pulsating) muscular activity, which also can be described as tremor. The typical tremor frequency is about 8 Hz, but also multiples may occur, such as 16 Hz. Tremor can often be observed as silent 'vibrations' during fixed positions, but can also result in a rapid opening and closing of the airway, which is manifested as a fast repetition of sounds (about 7 to 9 Hz). We suggest that the tremor results from a normally functioning cerebellum trying to compensate for the difference between the motor commands from the cortex and the actual position of the articulators—but overcompensates in both directions. Tremor may, in some instances, break a fixed position and allow continued speech. The studies suggest that widespread tremor constitutes a large part of the physical concomitants in stuttering.

3. Levels of muscular tension. The level of muscular tension in articulatory muscles is predominantly within the normal range for speech. Very high levels of tension tend to be associated with tremor.

4. Immediate mechanisms of stuttered disruptions. An immediate mechanism is here defined as the last step in the chain of events resulting in a stuttered speech disruption. These immediate mechanisms occur in the mechanical speech apparatus. A range of different immediate mechanisms for the disruptions have been observed, for example the following proposals:

> ***a) Repetitions for the repair of missing muscular activation.*** A frequent pattern in part-word repetitions is that speech is disrupted because one or several required speech muscles are not activated when needed, or activated too weakly. The word is restarted until all required muscles are activated.
>
> ***b) Fast sound repetitions.*** Fast sound repetitions, at about 7 to 9 Hz (or an interval of about 0.125 seconds) are likely to be the audible manifestation of a tremor opening and closing the airway.
>
> ***c) Silent pauses from laryngeal blocks.*** Blocks of the airflow at the laryngeal level typically result from complete constriction of the airway at the level of the vestibular folds, just above the vocal folds.
>
> ***d) Silent pauses from articulatory blockage of airflow.*** The airflow can also be blocked

by sustained closure of the lips or sustained pressing of the tongue against the roof of the mouth.

e) Silent pauses from laryngeal openings. Silent 'blocks' frequently result from involuntary opening (abduction) of the vocal folds, precluding phonation. These "laryngeal openings" are characterized by the loss of air, but typically without physical concomitants—presumably because the person cannot react by building up air pressure.

f) Voiceless prolongations. Laryngeal openings can also result in prolongation of voiceless consonants before a vowel, e.g./sssssssssolemn/. In this case the voiceless consonant is prolonged until the vocal folds are in the position for phonation.

g) Prolongations with articulatory muscles stuck in a fixed position. However, most prolongations (and probably all prolongations of voiced sounds) are the result of articulatory muscles being stuck in a fixed position. Typical examples are sustained contraction of the orbicularis oris lip muscle, closing the lips and resulting in a prolongation of /mmmm/, sometimes even when lip closure is not intended. Another example is prolongation of /L/ as a result of sustained contraction of tongue muscles.

h) Slow sound repetitions. Brief bursts of sounds, voiced or voiceless, can occur as a result of sustained contraction of articulatory muscles blocking the airflow, resulting in silent pauses. The bursts of sounds occur when the contraction is temporarily reduced, so that the air pressure from the lungs makes air briefly pass the obstruction.

i) Repetitions as a result of 'blocks.' Repetitions of longer sequences tend to occur as a response to some type of interruption, at some level, hindering the continuation.

ABOUT THE CURRENT TERMINOLOGY

It is clear from the list above that the traditional categorization of stuttering events as repetitions, prolongations, and blocks provides limited information about the actual nature of the speech disruption. In particular, the word 'blocks' is ambiguous. In the current literature it appears that the term block is typically used to signify a blockage of the airflow, even though it also seems to be used as an umbrella term for silent pauses or for stuttered disruptions in general. However, in the textbook from Charles Van Riper in 1939, he described a block as a temporary inability to move the speech musculature: "the stutterer finds himself unable to move a certain speech structure when it is necessary for him to do so" (p. 121). Interestingly, this is an exact description of the symptoms of a motor block disorder. To reduce this ambiguity, we suggest using the term 'block' with a specification. For example, a "laryngeal block" would signify a hard closure of airway at the laryngeal level, while a "motor block" would refer to the temporary inability to move forward in the motor sequence.

IMPLICATIONS FOR BRAIN THEORIES OF STUTTERING

Active inhibition theories. When considering stuttering in relation to various neuroscience theories, it is important to consider to what extent the observed motor symptoms correspond to what can be expected from the theories. One influential set of theories postulates that active inhibition of speech is a central aspect of stuttering—possibly as a result of negative expectations or anxiety. This idea has been linked to a general model by the psychologist Adam Aron, in which the command center for the inhibition of action (the "brake pedal") is located within the right hemisphere frontal cortex, sending stop-commands to the basal ganglia. It is quite possible that this or similar mechanisms contribute to the situational variability of stuttering, but as a main explanation there are two issues to consider. First, the neural mechanism outlined by Aron is assumed to inhibit actions as a whole, not specific muscles. In contrast, it was frequently observed that specific muscles did not get activated while phonation and other muscles were unaffected until the speech attempt was interrupted and restarted a little later. Second, it is difficult to see how a cortical right hemisphere mechanism of active inhibition would result in the experience of prolonged loss of motor control, for several seconds. This phenomenon rather points towards the basal ganglia as the center for the disruption.

MOTOR CONTROL THEORIES

Another set of influential theories are based on the assumption that people who stutter have an imprecise system for speech motor control and/or an inefficient feedback control system.

This is assumed to somehow result in errors of articulation and feedback corrections that lead to speech disruptions. There are many different formulations on this theme. However, to the best of our understanding, the observations from the studies seem to differ from what would be expected from motor control theories of stuttering. First, if the control system is imprecise, we would expect to see articulatory errors in the fluent speech before instances of stuttering, which we typically do not. Second, we often observed sustained static contractions of articulatory muscles during stuttering. This is contrary to the theory, which predicts instability. Third, the observed motor errors in stuttering are more likely to be "all-or-nothing" than gradual, which rather points towards some gating mechanism than a correction mechanism. Fourth, motor control models have difficulties explaining blocks at the beginning of utterances, when there is no feedback or no errors to correct.

PROPOSAL OF BRAIN MECHANISM

As discussed above, the subjective and objective phenomenology of stuttering align well with the phenomenology of motor block disorders such as freezing of gait. It is therefore reasonable to consider the proposed neurological mechanisms of freezing of gait also in relation to stuttering. One proposal that stands out for having strong explanatory power and being based on empirical evidence has been presented by Shine et al., (2013). In short, the core of this proposal is that the motor block occurs when there is a transient functional decoupling between the cortical networks and the basal ganglia. Normally there is continuous and reciprocal exchange of signals between these two levels. The communication is based on a common rhythm of oscillations within the cortex and the basal ganglia. One possible source of functional decoupling might be that the cortical level and the basal ganglia level somehow get out of sync, resulting in a temporary loss of communication and stalling of the motor system.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on these initial studies it is our view that in order to understand stuttering we need to consider the actual nature of the speech disruptions in more detail. The main proposition is that stuttering, fundamentally, can be considered to be a motor block disorder, with the activation of the next motor program being the core problem. Reactions tend to increase the tension and may result in tremor, which is proposed to constitute a large part of the physical concomitants. A multitude of different immediate mechanisms disrupt speech in stuttering, at all possible levels of the speech apparatus.

REFERENCES

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Shine, J. M. et al. (2013). Freezing of gait in Parkinson's disease is associated with functional decoupling between the cognitive control network and the basal ganglia. Brain 136, 3671–3681.

2025 VIRTUAL LEARNING

Find future virtual learning sessions at stutteringhelp.org/virtuallearning

ARE YOU ALL EARS?: ACTIVE MINDFUL LISTENING FOR OURSELVES AND OTHERS
James Panico, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | Southern Illinois University Edwardsville
Scott Palasik, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | University of Akron

EFFECTIVE COLLABORATION WITH TEACHERS TO SUPPORT CHILDREN WHO CLUTTER
Susanne Cook, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, Rutger Wilhelm

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL MARKERS OF CHILDHOOD STUTTERING
Soo-Eun Chang, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | University of Michigan

NAVIGATING STUTTERING IN DOWN SYNDROME: INSIGHTS AND IMPACT
Emily Lowther, Ph.D., CPSP, CCC-SLP | Curtin University (Australia)

CONTEMPORARY STUTTERING MODIFICATION
Chris Constantino, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | Florida State University

ADVOCACY SKILLS FOR SCHOOL-AGE KIDS AND TEENS WHO STUTTER: APPLICATION OF A CONCEPTUAL MODEL
Kristin Chmela, M.A., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF | Chmela Communication Center

BEYOND THE CHILD: EXPLORING PARENTAL TEMPERAMENT IN STUTTERING INTERVENTION
Katerina Ntourou, Ph.D., CCC-SLP | Case Western Reserve

WHAT DO CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS WANT FROM THERAPY AND HOW CAN WE ENSURE WE ARE MEETING THEIR NEEDS AND NOT JUST FOLLOWING OUR OWN AGENDA?
Sharon Millard, Ph.D., RegMRCSLT, RegHCPC | Michael Palin Centre

CRITICAL THINKING ACROSS CASE STUDIES
Nicholas Caruso, M.S., CCC-SLP, Kyle D. Pelkey M.S., CCC-SLP | Chmela Communication Center

OXFORD 2025

ST CATHERINE'S COLLEGE, OXFORD

SEPTEMBER 23-26, 2025

The 14th Oxford Stuttering and Cluttering Research Conference, formerly the Oxford Dysfluency Conference, was held at St Catherine's College, Oxford from 23–26 September 2025.

The conference brought together researchers and clinicians to provide a forum for discussion and collegial debate about the most current and innovative research and clinical practices. Stuttering Foundation videographer, Bob O'Brien, was present to film the keynote presentations. Some of those films will then be made available to a worldwide audience through the Stuttering Foundation streaming platform. Foundation Podcast and Virtual Learning host Sara MacIntyre also attended the many sessions. Both Sara and Bob oversaw a table of Foundation materials, newsletters, and other various offerings.

Sara noted, "by the second day, most of the items were gone. Diletta Vedovelli, a therapist from Italy, came up to me holding the latest SFA Kids Newsletter edition and shared how thrilled her client was to see his letter.

Outside of the table, I had many people coming up to me relating how thankful they are for the Virtual Learning Series and Podcast, highlighting the accessibility and quality."

All in all, it was a very rewarding three days on the St. Catherine's campus. Congratulations to the Michael Palin Centre and George Washington University as well as Elsevier for a well-organized conference.

Top left: Dr. Nan Bernstein Ratner, CCC-SLP
Middle right: Bob O'Brien, Sara MacIntyre, M.A., CCC-SLP
Bottom right: Elaine Kelman, MSc., Cert. CBT, FRCSLT, Reg. HCPC; Dr. Kurt Eggers, SLP; Dr. Sharon Millard, MRCSLT, Reg. HCPC

By Tom Scharstein, Chairman, World Stuttering Network

THE MOST EXCITING THING IN THE STUTTERING COMMUNITY: THE VAN RIPER TAPES

In every generation, certain figures rise to a level where their influence reshapes an entire field. For physics, it was Albert Einstein. For speech therapy (especially in the treatment of stuttering,) it was Charles Van Riper. To this day, his work stands as a foundation, and perhaps the most exciting news for our community is that his legendary Van Riper Tapes are now freely available through the Stuttering Foundation's website.

Van Riper's motto, "Learn to stutter easier," was not only groundbreaking in his time but remains a lifeline today. Instead of promising a world where stuttering was erased, he showed us how to live fully with it. His approach emphasized acceptance, openness, and reducing the struggle. He believed that stuttering could be managed, modified, and carried with dignity . . . and that people who stutter could thrive while still being authentically themselves.

WHAT ARE THE VAN RIPER TAPES?

The Van Riper Tapes are a series of recorded lectures, therapy demonstrations, and discussions by Dr. Van Riper himself. Produced in the mid-20th century, these tapes captured his unique blend of science, wisdom, and humanity. They reveal not only his techniques but also his warmth and compassion toward people who stutter. In them, viewers hear Van Riper outline his famous stages of therapy:

Identification – becoming aware of one's own stuttering behaviors and attitudes.

Desensitization – reducing fear and shame associated with stuttering.

Modification – practicing strategies to stutter in ways that are less tense and more controlled.

Stabilization – integrating changes into daily life.

While the recordings are several decades old, the ideas are anything but outdated. His voice still rings with clarity, urging us to strip away fear, face stuttering directly, and reclaim the joy of communication.

WHY THEY STILL MATTER TODAY

One of the most remarkable things about Van Riper's work is its timelessness. Just as Einstein's theories still shape modern physics, Van Riper's principles still shape and inspire modern speech therapy. His understanding of the human side of stuttering, not just the mechanics, makes his teachings as relevant in 2025 as they were in the 1950s. In a world where technology advances at breathtaking speed, it's easy to assume that old resources are outdated. But the Van Riper Tapes remind us that wisdom and human insight don't expire. His strategies for stuttering modification remain cornerstones of therapy, and his compassion continues to offer hope.

Archival Photo of Charles Van Riper with Malcom Fraser, circa 1970s

THE STUTTERING FOUNDATION GIFT

The Stuttering Foundation has made these historic and invaluable tapes freely available to the public. For students of speech-language pathology, they are an essential glimpse into the roots of our profession. For people who stutter and their families, they are an invitation to hear from the man who pioneered acceptance and empowerment long before it became part of mainstream conversation.

You can now watch these tapes...unedited, authentic, and powerful...through the Stuttering Foundation's website. They are more than historical documents; they are living lessons, filled with insights that still change lives today.

CARRYING THE LEGACY FORWARD

Van Riper's message was clear: stuttering does not have to hold you back. With courage, knowledge, and the right tools, you can learn to stutter in ways that reduce struggle and open doors to connection. His legacy is one of hope, empowerment, and dignity. So when we say that the most exciting thing in the stuttering community today is the Van Riper Tapes, it's not nostalgia...it's recognition. Recognition that the wisdom of the past is fueling the progress of the present, and guiding us into the future.

If you haven't yet experienced Van Riper's voice, now is your chance. Visit the Stuttering Foundation's website, scan the QR code, and step into the presence of a giant in our field. Because just as Einstein reshaped how we understand the universe, Van Riper reshaped how we understand stuttering. And his voice is waiting for you . . . steady, hopeful, and still urging us all to "learn to stutter easier."

STUTTERING FOUNDATION®
PODCAST

The Stuttering Foundation Podcast
WORLDWIDE LISTENER STATISTICS

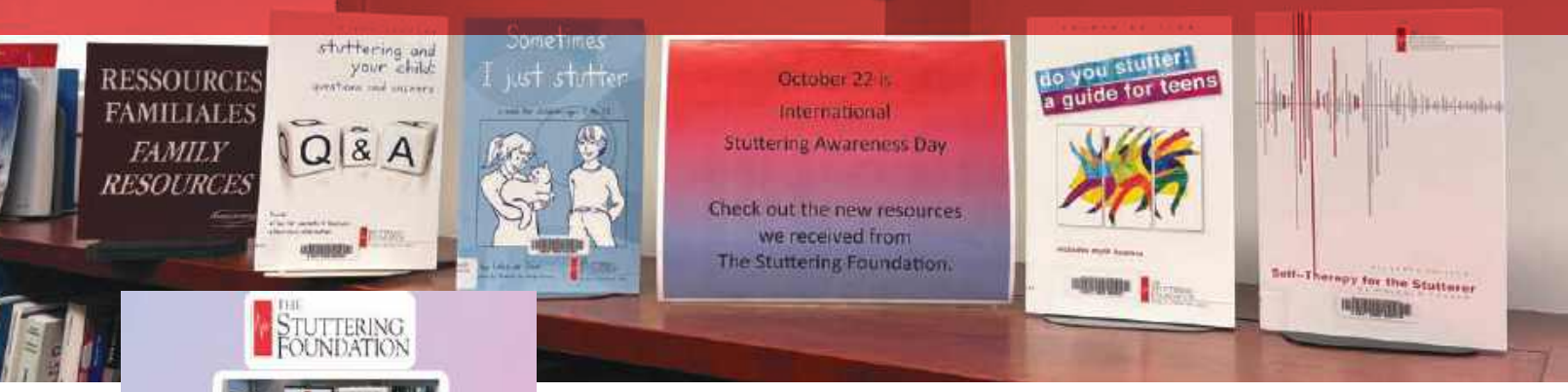
Countries / Territories (180 Total)

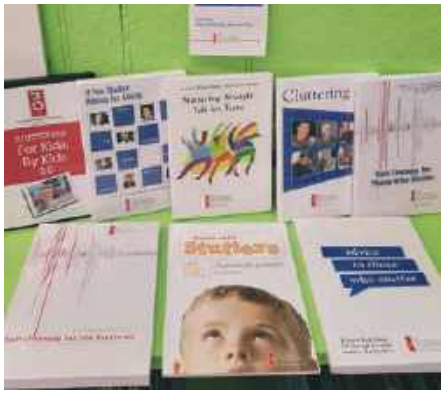
United States	65 %	89,949
United Kingdom	5 %	7,270
Canada	5 %	6,848
Australia	2 %	3,598
Germany	1 %	1,891
India	1 %	1,607
Ireland	1 %	1,430
Netherlands	0 %	1,283
Türkiye	0 %	1,247
Israel	0 %	1,211

Cities (8511 Total)

Los Angeles, California	1 %	1,642
Chicago, Illinois	1 %	1,405
New York, New York	1 %	1,356
Austin, Texas	1 %	1,314
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	0 %	1,246
Dublin, Leinster	0 %	1,122
Houston, Texas	0 %	1,117
Sydney, New South Wales	0 %	960
Dallas, Texas	0 %	941
Toronto, Ontario	0 %	915

Libraries Let Stuttering Resources Shine





As a trusted source of current and timely information on stuttering, our materials are as close as your nearest public library. For decades, The Stuttering Foundation has made its books and videos available for free to public libraries.

Today, with help of the Foundation's Information Specialist, Patty Reed, and the generosity of our benefactors, more than 16,000 libraries shelve our materials. Patty's outreach by press release to newspapers helps spread the word to communities about materials available at their local library.

"More than three million Americans stutter, yet stuttering remains misunderstood by most people," Stuttering Foundation's Jane Fraser said. "Myths, such as believing people who stutter are less intelligent or suffer from psychological problems, still persist despite research refuting these erroneous beliefs."

If you find a library that doesn't shelve our materials, ask them to submit a request to info@stutteringhelp.org.

STUTTERING FOUNDATION CELEBRITY CORNER

PEGGY LIPTON

HOLLYWOOD ICON & STUTTERING PIONEER

Both the stuttering community and the entertainment industry lost a pioneering shining star on May 11, 2019, when actress Peggy Lipton died of colon cancer at the age of 72. First diagnosed in 2004, she seemingly beat colon cancer and became a public advocate urging people to get a colonoscopy. Tragically, cancer returned and robbed her of her life.

Born Margaret Ann Lipton in New York City on August 30, 1946, to Harold Lipton and Rita Benson, she was raised in an upper-middle class Jewish household in Nassau County, Long Island. Her father was a corporate lawyer and a graduate of Harvard Law School. Her mother, Rita Benson, was born Rita Rosenberg in Dublin, Ireland, as part of Dublin's thriving Jewish community and immigrated to the United States. Through her mother, Peggy would retain Irish citizenship and have an Irish passport.

While still in high school, Peggy started modeling with the Ford Agency and transferred to the Professional Children's School. Moving with her family to Los Angeles in 1964, she signed with Universal Pictures and started having guest roles on numerous primetime television shows such as *The Virginian, The Alfred Hitchcock Hour, Bewitched, and The F.B.I.* However, it was not until 1968 when she was cast in the Aaron Spelling produced *The Mod Squad* that she gained prominence and became a household name. The show also started Aaron Spelling's career as a television mogul.

The Mod Squad featured a trio of undercover "hippie cops," all of whom had previous brushes with the law. The show has been described as, "the concept was to take three rebellious, disaffected young social outcasts and convince them to work as unarmed undercover detectives as an alternative to being incarcerated. Their youthful, hippie personas would enable them to get close to the criminals they would investigate."

Margaret Ann Lipton was an American model, actress, and singer. She made appearances in many of the most popular television shows of the 1960s before she landed her defining role as flower child Julie Barnes in the crime drama The Mod Squad *(1968–1973), for which she was nominated for four Emmy Awards and four Golden Globe Awards, winning the Golden Globe Award for Best Actress in a Television Series – Drama in 1970.*

Photos by ABC/Hulton Archive/Courtesy of Getty Images; Angela Weiss/Getty Images

Lipton played Julie Barnes, a described "canary with a broke wing," who was arrested for vagrancy after running away from her prostitute mother's San Francisco home. The show was a first in that it was a prime-time acknowledgement of the hippie culture and one of the first examples of multiracial casting on television. It catapulted Lipton to television stardom. She was nominated for four Emmy awards in her five seasons on the show and in 1971 won a Golden Globe Award for Best TV Actress in a Drama.

After *The Mod Squad* went off the air in 1973, Lipton took a sabbatical from acting for 15 years. In 1974, she married Quincy Jones, Grammy-Award winning musician and producer, and the couple would have two daughters, Kidada, an actress, model, and fashion designer, and Rashida, an actress in film and television.

By all accounts in books and magazine articles, Peggy Lipton was a major player alongside her husband when he produced Michael Jackson's famous 1982 Thriller album, which ranks as the best-selling album of all time worldwide and swept the 1984 Grammy Awards. However, Lipton and Jones separated in 1986 and divorced in 1990, though remaining good friends.

With the exception of acting in a 1979 made-for-TV movie of a *Mod Squad* reunion, *The Return of The Mod Squad*, Lipton did not return to acting until starring in a 1988 ABC movie *Addicted to His Love*. At the time in a 1988 profile in People magazine, she stated, "I never had confidence – never. The hardest thing to know is your own worth, and it took me years and years to find out what mine is."

From 1990-1991 there was a resurgence in Peggy Lipton's career as she had a supporting role in *Twin Peaks*, David Lynch's cult-hit TV show. She played Norma Jennings, the owner of the Double R Diner. In 2017, she reprised the role of Norma Jennings in *Twin Peaks: The Return*, as well as in the show's spinoffs, including *Twin Peaks: Fire Walk with Me*.

During her years of fame on *The Mod Squad* from 1968-1973, it was reported in the supermarket tabloid media on many occasions that Lipton struggled with stuttering. However, it failed to carry over into the mainstream media. In 2005, Lipton published her memoir *Breathing Out*, which was co-authored by David and Coco Dalton, and went into great detail about her lifelong issues with stuttering.

She titled chapter six "Eggy" and detailed how when she was 13, she and her brother Kenny went away to summer camp and she wasn't able to give her name. "That first day at camp we formed a line, and I had to give my name. I couldn't do it. I couldn't get the 'P' in 'Peggy' to come out. I stood there shaking, my lips trying to get themselves around the consonant. My eyes twitched and danced around my head from the enormous effort. I was summoned to the front of the line. 'Oh, just write your name down on the list,' the exasperated counselor finally said."

She continued to say that years later when she was a model and had to call to photographers to ask if they were interested in seeing her book, she would just say her name was "Eggy. . . ." The people at the other end would usually say "what?" and then stumble through the options until they reached "Peggy."

Chapter nine in her book addresses her stuttering and she begins by saying, “My stutter probably had some basis in physiology, for both my brothers had problems with language. Bob had a disorder that made him stammer. Kenny had dyslexia, the reversing of words, along with a speech impediment that made it difficult for him to grasp and say many phrases.”

When she first started her acting career and signed a contract with Universal Studios, she was obliged to take all the jobs to which she was assigned. She wrote, “I was compelled to take all jobs I was given and say lines I couldn’t get out because of my stutter. I’d fret and stay awake all night worrying about how to ask the director if I could change or rearrange a sentence just so I wouldn’t have to say a certain consonant. A ‘p’ or ‘g’ at the beginning of a word made me break out in a cold sweat. With everyone waiting to shoot the scene I was sure the smell of fear was emanating from my pores. Rarely would anyone let me change a line so I would pray and turn completely inside and out with trepidation. I’d stammer, freeze, or fake that I had forgotten the line. I would feel like I was about to pass out, until by a miracle of determination and detachment, I’d catch a wave and ride its smoothness into the moment and dive into the dreaded words. Out they came. I had summoned up the gods. I learned to do this over and over.”

Upon getting the role of Julie Barnes on *The Mod Squad,* Lipton wrote, “After all the struggles with acting and the stuttering and being shuffled around the studios, I finally felt at home on a set. I was one of the stars, which helped alleviate my insecurities. Getting the part of Julie Barnes in Mod Squad gave me a feeling of euphoria.”

Later in *Breathing Out*, she related how her two co-stars, Michael Cole and Clarence Williams III, stood up for her to a demanding director who did not understand her speech difficulties. She wrote, “He’d badgered me when I insisted on changing some lines that I was having difficulty saying because of my stutter. Michael and Clarence demanded an apology for me and got it.”

Peggy Lipton was one of the first modern women celebrities who was open about her stuttering and a definite role model. She is remembered fondly by an entire generation who watched her on *The Mod Squad*, the overwhelming majority of which did not know that she struggled with stuttering. Her 2019 death to colon cancer was a sad day for the entertainment industry, as well as for the stuttering community. Her example of positive energy and triumph over adversity will forever be an inspiration to people who stutter.

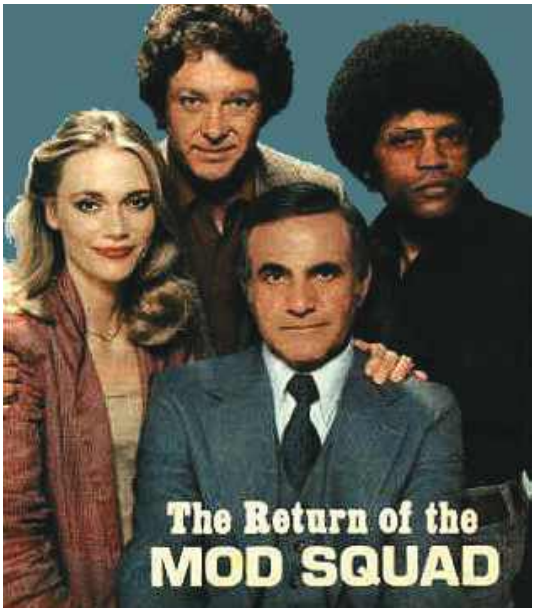


Photo by Archive Photos/Getty Images; Alberto E. Rodriguez/Getty Images

TWO POPULAR STUTTERING FOUNDATION VIDEOS ARE NOW AVAILABLE IN SPANISH!!

(en español!)

Autoterapia para Aquellos que Tartamudean is available on our Streaming Video Library at **www.StutteringHelp.org**. Based on the timeless self-help book, now in its 11th edition, by Stuttering Foundation Founder, Malcolm Fraser, this new video provides a powerful message to all who view it:

If you stutter, you do not need to surrender helplessly to your speech difficulty because you can change the way you talk. There is no quick and easy way to tackle the problem, but with the right approach, self-therapy can be effective!

Ayuda, Mi Hijo Tartamudea! is available free on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/stutteringfdn. In this 16-minute video, parents and speech-language experts talk about how to promote easier talking as they interact with their children. The professionals offer simple tips on stuttering that parents can easily follow.

THE STUTTERING FOUNDATION PODCAST
SEASON 7: 2025

Season Seven of the Stuttering Foundation Podcast returned on Tuesdays in 2025. The Stuttering Foundation is continuing efforts to deliver relevant and accessible learning opportunities. You can expect the same great mix of clinical discussions, research updates, and special segments (with a few surprises to come as well!)

STUTTERING FOUNDATION® PODCAST

Listen to Stuttering Foundation Podcast at stutteringhelp.org/podcast and also on Apple, Spotify, and Stitcher

S7: E1- EMPOWERING CLIENTS WITH DR. DAVID LUTERMAN
David Luterman, Ed.D., CCC-SLP | Professor Emeritus, Emerson College

S7: E2- NEURO-LINGUISTIC PROGRAMMING (NLP) AND STUTTERING
Gemma Clarke, MSc, BA (Hons) | Michael Palin Centre

S7: E3- RESEARCH UPDATE: ATYPICAL GUT MICROBIOTA COMPOSITION IN A MOUSE MODEL OF DEVELOPMENTAL STUTTERING
Ho Ming Chow, Ph.D., Sayan Nanda, B.S., Nicole Guarino, Ph.D. | University of Delaware

S7: E4- CLUTTERING ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT WITH DR. KATHLEEN SCALER SCOTT
Kathleen Scaler Scott, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF | Misericordia University

S7: E6- COUNSELING APPROACHES MINI-SERIES WITH DANIEL SHAW: SFBT
Daniel Shaw, M.S., CCC-SLP | Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center

S7: E7- COUNSELING APPROACHES MINI-SERIES WITH DANIEL SHAW: MOTIVATIONAL INTER-VIEWING
Daniel Shaw, M.S., CCC-SLP | Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center

S7: E8- COUNSELING APPROACHES MINI-SERIES WITH DANIEL SHAW: DBT
Daniel Shaw, M.S., CCC-SLP | Vanderbilt Bill Wilkerson Center

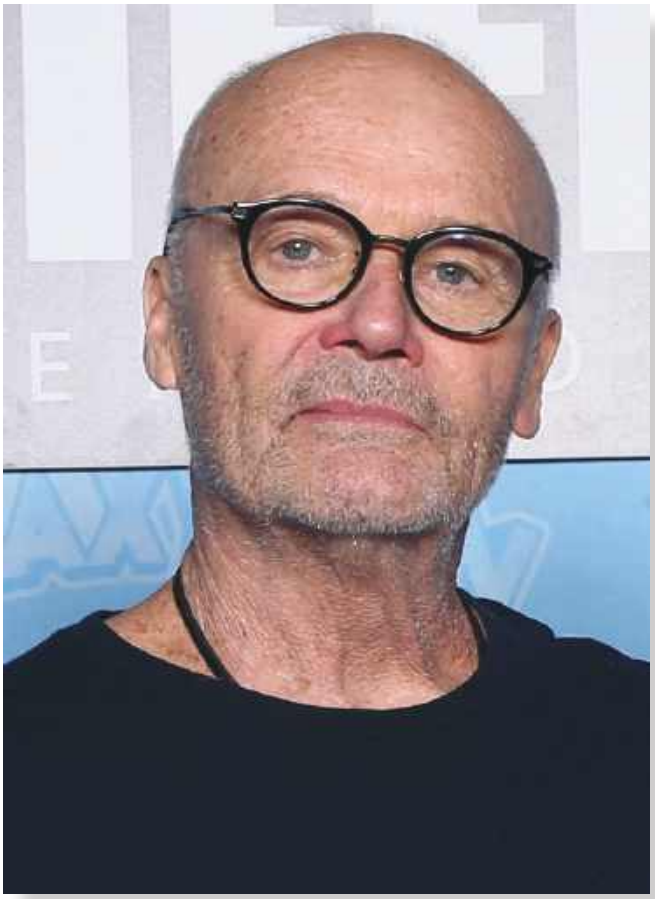
S7: E9- BEHIND THE SCENES OF GROUP THERAPY
Ali Berquez, MSc, PG Dip CT (Oxon), BRIEF Cert. SF Practice | Michael Palin Centre

S7: E10- INSIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 'FINDING YOUR VOICE' THERAPY PROGRAM
Tim Saltuklaroglu, Ph.D., Tricia Hedinger, M.S., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF, Eddie Brown, M.A., CCC-SLP | University of Tennessee Health Science Center

STUTTERING FOUNDATION CELEBRITY CORNER

CREED BRATTON

TELEVISION STAR OF NBC'S THE OFFICE



Creed Bratton, who has spoken publicly about his stuttering, has had a varied and fascinating life to say the least. He is best known for playing a fictionalized version of himself on the hit NBC sitcom *The Office* from 2005-2013, which is ironic because *The Office* has connections to other famous people who stutter. The show's star John Krasinski, who portrayed Jim Halpert, is married to actress Emily Blunt, a person who stutters who has been the longtime spokesperson for the American Institute for Stuttering. Also, actress Rashida Jones, who portrayed Karen Filippelli on the show, is the daughter of actress Peggy Lipton, a famous person who stutters.

While he is best known to the public for his role on *The Office*, Bratton has had a much a varied life to say the least, first coming into the public eye in 1967 as the lead guitarist and background vocalist of a prominent American rock band, The Grass Roots.

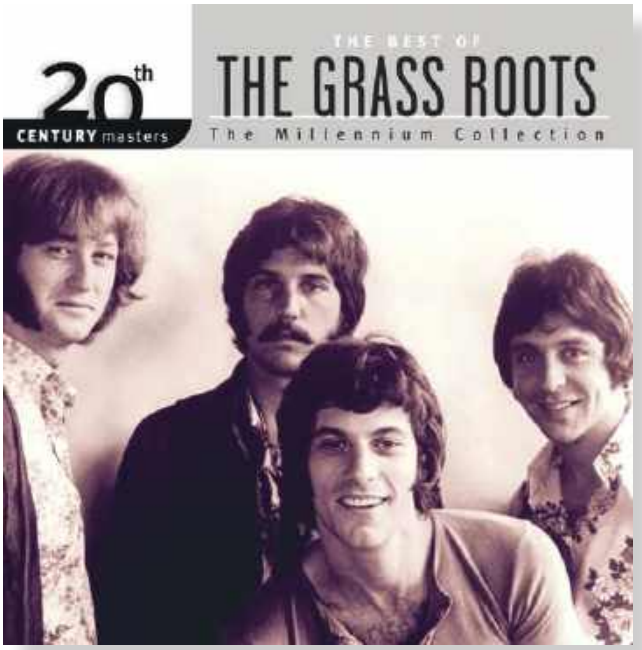
Born William Charles Schneider on February 8, 1943, in Los Angeles, Bratton was raised in Coarsegold, California, a town near Yosemite National Park. After his father died during military service when Bratton was two years old, his mother married a firefighting forest ranger named Sam Ertmoed and the young boy started going by the name "Chuck Ertmoed."

Bratton was part of one of the most successful rock bands of the period of the late 1960's and early 1970's. He was a lead guitarist and sometimes vocalist for The Grass Roots, which charted 14 Top 40 hits on The Billboard Hot 100 between July 1966 and July 1972. Bratton was with the band for their most productive period from 1967 – 1969.

After a tour of Europe and the Middle East as a travelling musician during which he adopted the professional name “Creed Bratton,” he returned to California and in 1966 formed the band The 13th Floor, with himself on lead guitar, Warren Entner on rhythm guitar, Kenny Fukomoto on bass, and Rick Coonce on drums. The 13th Floor was signed by producer Lou Adler to his Dunhill Records label and assigned to work with songwriters/producers P.F. Sloan and Steve Barri. Sloan and Barri had previously created a studio group named The Grass Roots, that featured Sloan on lead vocals and guitar, which charted with a song “Where Were You When I Needed You” that hit number 28 on the Top 40 in 1966, so for the sake of convenience and continuity, The 13th Floor adopted the name “The Grass Roots” and continued under that moniker. Rob Grill stepped in as bass player and lead vocalist, replacing Kenny Fukomoto, who was drafted into the U.S. Army.

Photo by Frederick M. Brown/Getty Images

The first single of the new incarnation of The Grass Roots, “Let’s Live for Today,” was a major hit, reaching number 8 on the charts and selling over two million records to be awarded a gold disc. The following year, their most successful single, “Midnight Confessions,” reached number five on the charts and was an international hit. Bratton departed from The Grass Roots over a dispute concerning the artistic direction of the band. He was frustrated that Dunhill was not allowing the band to write their own songs and play all of the instruments on the records. After a disastrous performance at Fillmore West in April 1969, Bratton was asked to leave the band.



The Grass Roots had four subsequent hit songs after Creed Bratton left the band, beginning with “I’d Wait A Million Years in 1969.” The other three charted in 1971 and all live on to this day on the playlists of oldies stations like the other hits. “Temptation Eyes” reached number 15; “Sooner or Later” reached number 9; “Two Divided by Love” reached number 16.

Photo by Frederick M. Brown/Getty Images

Bratton has mentioned over the years how he struggled with stuttering in his childhood and teenage years. A July 29, 2020, article in *Esquire* magazine titled "Creed Bratton Has a Story to Tell" states, "Teenage Ertmoed began acting by chance when, in high school, a speech therapist recommended performing on stage to overcome a stutter." In fact, he was so energized by how acting guided him to fluency that after college he enrolled at Sacramento State College (now California State University, Sacramento) and majored in drama.

On July 29, 2020, *People* magazine released a video of an interview with the actor on their website with the headline, "How 'Office' Star Creed Bratton 'Gained Control' Over His Stuttering and His Fear of Public Speaking." In the interview, Bratton stated, "I stuttered really, really terribly as a child. I was very insecure as a young man. They sent me to a speech therapist … this was like, the 1950's."

Bratton went on to explain that the speech therapist told him to try to stutter on purpose, and then within a week of practicing trying to stutter, he gained control of the 'mechanism' in his speech and stopped stuttering and never stuttered again.

He continued, "So then they said, 'I want you to speak as much as you can in front of people…join an acting class…get up in front of people…if there's an acting class, join an acting class…get up in front of people and conquer this fear because you do have this fear of opening your mouth and speaking because people laugh at you because of your stuttering."

In the years after leaving The Grass Roots, Bratton has released nine solo albums. At times, he had difficulties earning a living in the years in-between his Grass Roots days and his re-emergence on The Office. During one stretch he worked as a caterer on movie sets for a stretch of nine years before he transitioned his way into acting with the help of his good friend Beau Bridges. During some lean times, his royalty payments from his stint with The Grass Roots kept him afloat. There have been varied incarnations in the career of Creed Bratton and his fans can only await the next phase. When people who stutter hear his Grass Roots songs on the radio or watch episodes of *The Office* on streaming or reruns, they can take pride in knowing that this multi-talented individual is a fellow person who stutters and overcame some hard circumstances in his life, exemplifying the famous quote made by another famous person who stuttered, Sir Winston Churchill: "Never, never, never give up."

2025 VIRTUAL LEARNING ANALYTICS

8 Total Virtual Learning Sessions so far in 2025

Average Number of Attendees Per Session: **226**

Average Number of Registrants Per Session: **417**

Average Number of Countries Represented Per Session: **49**

Sessions with Highest Number of Attendees:

- Neurodevelopmental Markers of Childhood Stuttering | Soo-Eun Chang, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, University of Michigan

- Advocacy Skills for School-Age Kids and Teens Who Stutter: Application of a Conceptual Model | Kristin Chmela, M.A., CCC-SLP-BCS-FS, Chmela Communication Center

Session with the Most Countries Represented:

- Neurodevelopmental Markers of Childhood Stuttering | Soo-Eun Chang, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, University of Michigan

2025: IN MEMORIAM

Sulaiman AbdulNour
John Acquavella
Clark Andrews, Jr.
Kay Armstead
Dr. Kelmer Baxter
James W. Bell
David R. Berry, Sr.
Curt Betebenner
Dennis W. Blager
Dr. Oliver Bloodstein
Sister Charleen Bloom
Harry Borger
Richard H. Brown, Sr.
Lee Caggiano
Dennis Cairns
James M. Campbell
Michael Carlberg
Ann Cerf
Arthur Clapick
Dr. Sylvester Clifford
David K. Colbert
Edith Comito
Dr. Eugene B. Cooper
Michael and Mary Cristiano
Sherman N. Crockett, Sr.
Joan Wichter Crockett
Richard Curlee
Paul Czuchna
Lina Daltorio
Michael Dehdari
Katharyn Elizabeth Fell Demaree
Dr. Martin Diebold
Dr. William Dopheide
Tim Douthat
Matthew B. Duffy
Connie Dugan
Major James Duricy
Carol Ecke
Larry Eckloff
Dr. Joan Good Erickson
Edmund A. Evans
Edward Ewy
Eric Todd Fetsco
Florence Filley
Sander A. Flaum
John Flores
Malcolm Fraser
James Frick
Joseph R.G. Fulcher
Keith Gadbois
Ulises Gilberga
Annie Glenn
Nick Goodban
Maureen Greenspan
Dr. Hugo Gregory
Patrick Todd Griffin
Ruth E. Healey
Robert Hejna
James D. Hellwege
Judy Hellwege
James Hillis
Jane Holmes
Dr. Stephen B. Hood
Marilyn K. Johnson
James Earl Jones
Laura Judge
Arlene Kempe
Antanas Kiselis
Dorothy LaTourette
Patsy P. Livingston
C.L. Lott
Bob Love
Dr. Walter H. Manning
Susan McCullough
Pat McDaniel
Timothy McGuire
Sr. Martha Pappas Mills
Dr. Frederick Murray
Jodi M. Nesi
Kathleen C. O'Neill
Raffaele Parente, Jr.
William A. Parker, Jr.
Leon Parkin
Michael A. Patterson, Sr.
William Perkins
Dr. Theodore Peters
Alys Pitzer
Marty Prince
Dr. Alan Rabinowitz
Herbert M. Rein
Rhoda Ribner
William T. Rigotti
Dr. Lisa Scott
Dr. Joseph & Vivian Sheehan
Jason L. Simpson
J. Stanley Smith
Laurent Michael Stebbins
Alfred Steinmetz
Lizbeth J. Stevens
Larry Thompson
Theresa Thurman
Gweneth L. Toller
Kellie Veltre Trainor
Peter Tsimbidaros
Dr. Charles Van Riper
Luz Marina Vargas
Vilas V. Vawter, Jr.
Fred and Virginia Wagner
Joan Warner
Mary Weadon
Jonathan Weinberg
Sherrie L. Kofsky Weinstein
Raymond W. Wichowski
Betty Wiesner
Dr. Dean Williams
Dr. Bruce Witkind
Dr. and Mrs. Elliot Witkind
Mitchell Wyatt
Catherine H. Zimmer

STUTTERING FOUNDATION Q & A:
ONGMYUNG AHN

Early strings performer Dongmyung Ahn specializes in the study of liturgy and Jewish-Christian relations in the music of the medieval and early modern periods in Europe. She teaches at New York University and Queens College and is working on a memoir about music and mental health crises in a Korean immigrant family.

TELL US ABOUT YOURSELF!

I grew up mostly in Ohio and New Jersey, and live now in NYC. I'm an early string player (mostly baroque violin) and teach music history at colleges in NYC. Besides playing the violin, I love finding fun food to eat or cook, drinking tea, and writing. I think I've been able to enjoy my career simply by not giving up.

DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU FIRST BEGAN TO STUTTER?

It was in fourth grade, I had a couple of hot-tempered teachers who frightened me. I had a little bit of speech therapy, but not much. I was mostly afraid of meeting new people and having them ask me my name. The "D" sound is hardest for me to say so I always got stuck. I never wanted to raise my hand to answer questions in class. But with people who knew me, I knew they didn't mind that I stuttered so talked. I may have even been a chatterbox as a child. A friend in college gave me the nickname "D" which is easy for me to say, so that has helped a lot with meeting new people. When I was growing up, it kept me quiet around people I didn't know well. Sometimes it can feel like people don't know what to do when I am stuttering. I didn't want people to feel uncomfortable and I didn't want to feel uncomfortable, so I wouldn't talk very much.

HAS YOUR STUTTERING GOTTEN WORSE OR BETTER SINCE YOU WERE YOUNGER? HOW?

Gosh, maybe it has gotten better or at least I'm not as self conscious about it. I don't think it's gotten worse.

HOW DID/DOES STUTTERING AFFECT YOU IN YOUR CAREER? Well, as I wrote in an essay in Huffington Post recently, it has tried to keep me from doing what I do which is public speaking as a college professor. I still stutter through lectures, but my students don't seem to mind. I've been teaching for more than 15 years so I guess the stuttering hasn't gotten the better of me!

WHAT DO YOU DO TO CONTROL OR MANAGE IT, IF ANYTHING? The only thing that I've found that keeps it at status quo is getting enough sleep. I find that when I am tired, my stutter can get out of control.

WHAT ARE SOME CHALLENGES STUTTERING HAS PRESENTED TO YOU? Lecturing and giving talks, which is ironic because that's my job. I've gotten better at pacing myself in giving talks at academic conferences so I now don't stutter as much. But I still stutter in lectures. I think my greatest accomplishment with regard to stuttering is my job as a teacher.

BASED UPON YOUR EXPERIENCES, WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL CHILDREN WHO STUTTER? I would say three things: 1. take a breath when you feel it coming or even if you are stuck, 2. people can wait for you to speak, and 3. don't give up.

BASED UPON YOUR EXPERIENCES, WHAT WOULD YOU TELL PARENTS OF CHILDREN WHO STUTTER? My mom always assured me to relax which was good, but hard to do in the moment. And just wait for your child to get the word out. If they want help (sometimes I want the other person to just blurt out the word for me!), that works too. But mostly, the fact that your child (or friend, or parent or person behind the desk) has something worth listening to even if takes some time to say it. Having a stutter won't keep you from having a full and fulfilled life. That being said, if you have opportunities that can alleviate it, speech therapy for instance, by all means take advantage of it.

WHAT ELSE SHOULD WE KNOW? Stuttering doesn't need to keep you from doing what you love, or keep you from making friends or keep you from asking someone at the grocery store for help finding something. It's part of who we are, and something that we can learn to accept. Acceptance makes it easier to live with a stutter.

EASTERN WORKSHOP 2025 :
USING COGNITIVE APPROACHES WITH PEOPLE WHO STUTTER

Front Row: Sarah Delpeche, Caroline Brinkert, Elaine Kelman, Ali Berquez 2nd Row: Chloe Robichaud, Emmanuel Addo, Alice Disarò, Ashley Fetzer, Christi Masters, Kiana Tanghatar, Jessica Beers, Erin Leventhal, Diletta Vedovelli, Vanina Mino, Silvia Iannicola Back Row: Stojan Skorka, Randy Panzarino, Rupert Johnson, Carolina Miranda, Alexander Benevento, Laura Schiaroli, Paul DeLisio, Carlos Brandeo, Jhoan Stiven Gallego Bermudez, Meredith Daly, Christine Blomkvist

This one week workshop, conducted by Elaine Kelman, Alison Berquez, and Sarah Delpeche from the Michael Palin Centre in London and Caroline Brinkert from Boston University, was held at Boston University in June 2025. Its goal was to provide speech-language pathologists with an introduction to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) and Solution Focused Brief Therapy (SFBT) in relation to the assessment and treatment of stuttering. Therapists will also be equipped to deliver Palin PCIT (Parent-Child Interaction Therapy), an evidence based therapy programme for young children who stutter.

Comments from workshoppers included the following:

The course created a space for connection, reflection and growth. This week was an outstanding collaboration and outpouring of knowledge both from the highly esteemed presenters and my co-participants.

The style and format of the presentation was a unique blend that unearthed the strengths of all the participants and fostered a collaborative learning environment.

So said some of the workshoppers at the end of our week in Boston this past June. Twenty two therapists came together from across the globe to learn and grow so that they would be better clinicians. They shared their lives - and their openness and ability to reflect on themselves and their practice made this experience a very special one. Their readiness to reconsider and to try out new and different styles and activities meant that they allowed themselves to grow new strengths.

The resources, examples, and words about how to deal with specific complex cases will forever change my life.

I gained a new perspective and positive outlook on how to engage with and promote change in the lives of people who stutter.

The workshop started with an introduction to Cognitive Behaviour Therapy, then the focus was on Solution Focus Brief Therapy, followed by Palin Parent Child Interaction Therapy. Principles were discussed and underlying rationales explored, skills were practised, supported by clinical video examples, so that everyone would be equipped with new styles and skills and most importantly understand the difference that these would make to their clinical practice.

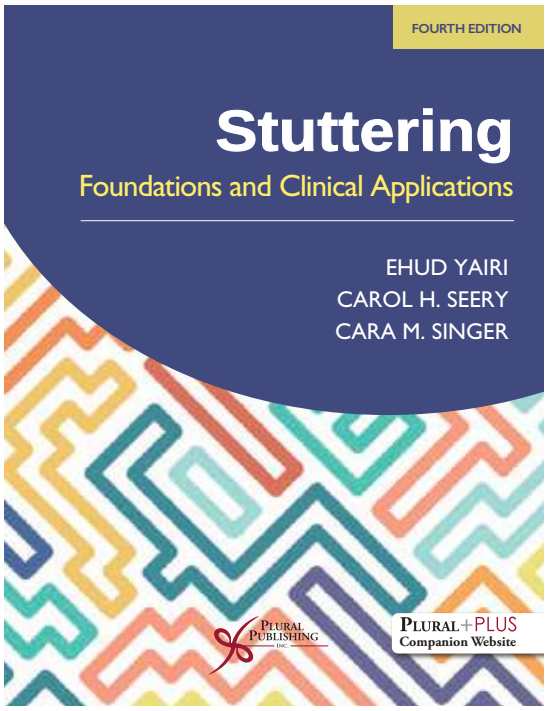
The application of the skills learned was practical and practised in a way that increased my confidence.

This course allowed me to understand deeply the parents' perspective and to be aware of how every word that we say as clinicians can impact our clients' lives and experiences with stuttering.

While the focus of the workshop was on stuttering I also feel that much of this information is transferable.

I learned critical thinking skills and how to make clinical decisions in light of these therapy practices.

A workshop for a relatively small group who effectively live together in dorms for the week is a unique opportunity to deep dive into what it is to be a therapist, how we can empower those who seek our help, how we can continue to grow in our knowledge and our skills and how we can support each other in the exciting quest to be the best we can be.



WHAT WE'RE READING:
THE SFA BOOKSHELF

The 4th edition of *"Stuttering: Foundation and Clinical Applications"* is now in print. Much of the book is written in a style that is also understood by interested nonprofessionals, including parents, teachers, adults who stutter, other professionals, and more. indeed, past editions have yielded many positive feedback letters from instructors, students, parents, adults who stutter, and others. Professors express special appreciation for the instructional resources that accompany the book. This includes multiple PowerPoint slides, case studies, test questions (multiple choice and essay), videos, and more.

The Stuttering Foundation provided preschool data for this book, which can be found on Table 2-4 on page 34.

2025 GIFTS IN HONOR

All who stutter
Anyone who has a stuttering problem
Julio Amaya
Teresa Amaya
Kenta Asars
Michael Baker
Finn Balan
Paul Barusich
Dominique Bell
President Joe Biden
Holly Bishop
Nicholas Boody
Guy Bradshaw
David Briggs
Susan Hamilton Burleigh
Capistrano Unified SD SLPs and SLPAs
Casey
Kristin Chmela
Rachel and Kai
Guiwana Compton
James Crennan
Jalyn Crittenden
Casey Davidson
Helen Davis
Susan Dietrich
Adriana DiGrande
Dr. Joe Donaher
Dolores Donovan
Dave Doucette
Dr. Dennis Drayna
Mark Fanta
Chuck Fisher
The Joker's Voice
Leah Fradkin
Art Frank
Jane Fraser
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Kendall
Kids Who Stutter
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STUTTERING FOUNDATION CELEBRITY CORNER

CAROL KAYE

LEGENDARY AMERICAN MUSICIAN & BASS PLAYER

Carol Kaye, the legendary bass player who has played on an estimated 10,000 tracks in a high-profile career that has spanned 65 years, will be inducted this year into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, although she does not plan to attend the event. A full-page article appeared in the Sunday, September 28, 2025, print edition of the *New York Times* titled, "Accolades Don't Interest a Revered Session Player: Nonetheless, the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Will Celebrate Carol Kaye."

Carol Kaye was born March 24, 1935, in Everett, Washington to musician parents Clyde and Dot Smith. After her parents' divorce, her mother raised her in California. She said in an interview, "So mom and I had some pretty tough times. I stuttered. I had buck teeth. I did well in school, but I just couldn't find myself at all."

Carol's life changed for the better at age 13 when she started playing steel guitar. "So my mom, God bless her, she managed to pull the money together and I took lessons. And you know, I kind of excelled at playing the steel guitar."

In another interview about her life she explained how her guitar playing changed her life, "I had to play because I was a poor kid who stuttered. As soon as I could start playing music, I could put food on the table. I found something that I was great at."

The New York Times article also stated, "Kaye, who was a lonely child with a pronounced stutter, flashed a natural talent on the instrument."

Honing her skills playing in jazz clubs, Carol in 1957 was given a chance opportunity to play on a session recording for a very young Sam Cooke on his song, "Summertime," an opportunity that would gloriously turn into a career as a session musician. She would continue to do session work, most famously playing guitar on Ritchie Valens 1958 hit "La Bamba," as well as Valens' hit "Donna." From there she started to work with Phil Spector, playing on such hits as The Crystals', "Then He Kissed Me" and The Righteous Brothers', "You've Lost That Loving Feeling." She became part of the group of famed sessions musicians that included drummer Hal Blaine, guitarist Glen Campbell, and pianist Larry Knechtel,

who in later years would be known collectively as "The Wrecking Crew." In 1963, a bass player failed to show for a session and Kaye filled in. From then on, she most definitely had her bass chops. The number of hit, on which she played is astounding, and includes artists such as Ray Charles, Cher, The Beach Boys, The Supremes, Wayne Newton, Buffalo Springfield, Joe Cocker, Glen Campbell, Martha and the Vandellas, The Monkees, Simon & Garfunkel, Frank Sinatra, Marvin Gaye, B.J. Thomas, Ike & Tina Turner, Sonny & Cher, and many other major artists. In later years, she worked on major film and television scores which are far too numerous to mention.

Some of the countless hit singles she played are the number one hits by The Monkees "I'm a Believer" and "Daydream Believer," the number one hit "Unchained Melody" by The Righteous Brothers, "Homeward Bound" by Simon & Garfunkel, the number one hit "Good Vibrations" by The Beach Boys, and the number one hit "Raindrops Keep Fallin' on My Head" by B.J. Thomas.

In the *New York Times* article, Paul McCartney explained how Carol Kaye's work on The Beach Boy's seminal album, 1966's Pet Sounds greatly influenced his work on The Beatles 1967 album Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band. The article states that McCartney was struck by the grand ambition of the music as well as the intricacies of the tracks like "Wouldn't It Be Nice." McCartney said, "And as I was a bass player, I listened closely to the bass parts." He was shocked to learn that it was not Brian Wilson playing bass. "Then I looked at the credits, and saw it wasn't Brian on bass, it was this girl, Carol – Carol Kaye. That was quite a shock to me. I started looking into what else Carol played on, and she was on everything."

LOS ANGELES - APRIL 1966: Bassist Carol Kaye plays an Epiphone hollowbody electric guitar in April 1966 in Los Angeles, California.

Photo by Jasper Dailey/Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

McCartney added, "After hearing Pet Sounds, I played around with that kind of thing on Sgt. Pepper where I was playing my Rickenbacker bass and with a pick. It was people like Carol and James Jamerson who turned me on to this melodic approach and I went to town – that really changed my style." In most interviews about her brilliant career, Carol Kaye talks about being the only woman in a basically all-male profession of studio musicians, and how she always had to hold her own. This is ironic in that we all know that the ratio of males to females, in terms of people who stutter, can be as high as 3.5-to-1. Women and girls who stutter have a role model in Carol Kaye, whose brilliant and highly documented 65-year of immense success speaks for itself. If you turn on an oldies station, chances are you won't go 20 minutes without hearing a song that Carol Kaye played on! Kudos for her long overdue induction into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame.

PEDIATRICIANS ONBOARD FOR EARLY INTERVENTION

Joseph Donaher, Ph.D., CCC/SLP

Attending the American Academy of Pediatrics Conference offers a unique opportunity to connect with pediatricians who are often the first point of contact for families concerned about stuttering. Many medical professionals visit our booth seeking information on stuttering due to a lack of understanding in this area. However, numerous healthcare providers also express their gratitude towards the Stuttering Foundation for equipping them with the necessary tools and information to support families dealing with stuttering.

These professionals often have long-standing relationships with the Foundation and eagerly anticipate our presence at the conference each year. A surprising number of them are unaware that stuttering is a neurologically based difference with genetic underpinning, often mistakenly attributing it to anxiety or nervousness.

Fortunately, the Stuttering Foundation addresses these misconceptions by distributing free educational materials to attendees, helping to dispel myths and provide accurate information. A significant portion of inquiries revolve around the appropriate timing and resources for referring families. Thanks to the Stuttering Foundation's ongoing efforts, pediatricians are now more informed and no longer suggest waiting until a child is five years old to make a referral.

L-L-London's L---ight Shining Bright

L-L-London's L---ight Shining Bright is about a little lion who has a stutter and how he and his friends work through making it a strength!

By Michelle Danko, Speech-Language Pathologist

(London on p.45 was the inspiration for Michelle's book. This corkboard presentation about stuttering made by Michelle Danko's students.)

New Insights from our Stuttering Helpline: Sex Ratios and Trends in Caller Data

We are pleased to share the latest figures from the Stuttering Foundation Help,line, which continues to provide vital support to people who stutter and their families. Over several years, our helpline has received an impressive 18,930 calls from parents of callers of preschoolers and 51,320 calls from parents of, or people who stutter, from elementary school-age through to adulthood. We are excited to update you on our most recent helpline figures in relation to sex ratios of those who have called for support and how these align with the current research.

As part of our ongoing commitment to understand stammering, we have analysed the sex ratios of those seeking support. The data offer unique and valuable insights into how stuttering presents across different ages within our callers and how this aligns with current research on sex differences in developmental stuttering.

WHAT THE RESEARCH TELLS US:

Yairi and Ambrose (2013) and Bloodstein, Bernstein-Ratner and Brundage (2021) summarise the studies that have reported the sex ratios for stuttering. The figures vary from study to study, which may be due to the numbers of people included, the country in which they were collected, or the way in which the data have been grouped and analysed with respect to ages.

Age	Total calls	male:female
2 years	Male – 1,908 Female – 1,288	1.48:1
3 years	Male – 4,423 Female – 2,205	2.01:1
4 years	Male – 3,856 Female – 1,406	2.74:1
5 years	Male – 2,838 Female – 1,006	2.82:1

Age group	Total calls	male:female
Elementary school age	Male – 14,591 Female – 4,131	3.53:1
Adolescents	Male – 9,647 Female – 2,902	3.33:1
Adults	Male – 14,802 Female – 5,247	2.82:1

Elementary School, Teen, and Adult Sex Breakdown (From StutteringHelp.org IR Requests)

Age	Sex	Count	Age Ratio
Elementary School	F	4,144	22.06 %
	M	14,639	77.94 %
		18,783	
Teen	F	2,907	23.10 %
	M	9,678	76.90 %
		12,585	
Adult	F	5,266	26.19 %
	M	14,839	73.81 %
		20,105	
Overall Male Ratio:		**76.07%**	
Overall Female Ratio:		**23.93%**	
Total Count:		**51,473**	

PreSchool Sex Breakdown (From StutteringHelp.org IR Requests)

PSAge	PSSex	PSCount	Age Ratio	Total Ratio
2	F	1,290	40.30 %	6.79 %
	M	1,911	59.70 %	10.07 %
		3,201		
3	F	2,211	33.26 %	11.65 %
	M	4,437	66.74 %	23.37 %
		6,648		
4	F	1,412	26.74 %	7.44 %
	M	3,868	73.26 %	20.37 %
		5,280		
5	F	1,009	26.16 %	5.31 %
	M	2,848	73.84 %	15.00 %
		3,857		
Overall Male Ratio:		**68.81%**		
Overall Female Ratio:		**31.19%**		
Total Count:		**18,986**		

Overall, the male:female ratio for under 18s seems to be broadly 3:1 with the adult ratio described by Yairi and Ambrose being 4:1. However, when the data are considered more closely with respect to age, there is some evidence that in young children aged 2, approximately the same number of boys and girls are stuttering, with the proportion of males steadily increasing during the preschool years, through elementary school, into the teen years (Yairi & Ambrose, 2013; Bloodstein et al., 2021; Logan, 2020).

Craig et al., (2002) reported the ratio of males:females in Australia is highest in the age group 11-20 at 4:1, increasing from 2.3:1 in ages 2-5 and 3.3:1 in ages 6-10. The proportion of males to females then reduces in the teenage years. The most recent investigation of the American population published by Briley, Merlo and Ellis (2022), reported incidence and prevalence rates of children stuttering from 3 to 17 years. The overall male:female stuttering ratio was 2:1. At 3 years, the sex ratio was 0.7:1 and at 4 years it was 2.3:1. The researchers concluded that this was due to a mixed effect of doubling male children who stutter and almost halving female CWS. This suggests a different developmental trajectory for males, who are starting later, while many females have started and stopped stuttering by age 4. From 4 to 7 years the male:female ratio gradually increased, averaging at peaking at 7 years to approximately 3:1. From 8 - 17 years, sex ratios fluctuated.

Sarah Delpeche
MSc, BSc(Hons),
RegMRCSLT, RegHCPC

Sharon Millard
Ph.D., MRCSLT

GIFTING MADE EASY

We are thankful for all of our generous donors! *When you donate to the Stuttering Foundation, you can rest assured that your gift will go to support our program services, benefiting people who stutter (and those who seek to educate and serve them) all around the world.*

CASH GIFTS

Checks can be mailed to:
Stuttering Foundation of America
P.O. Box 11749
Memphis, TN 38111-0749

OTHER GIFTS

Stocks, Securities, Remainder Trusts, Employer Matching Gift Programs, Annuities, and Retirement Asset Donations are just a few other ways to make a lasting impact with your donation dollar. Please check with your financial advisor, employer, and or legal advisor for details.

TRIBUTE GIFTS

Memorialize a deceased family member or friend with gifts to the Stuttering Foundation. Honor a birth, an anniversary, graduation, wedding, or any important occasion in the name of a loved one.

LEGACY GIFTS

It's easy to include the Stuttering Foundation in your will, and it will do a world of good! Contact us and/or your legal advisor for assistance.

DONATE FROM YOUR SMARTPHONE

Charitable contributions, and bequests to the Foundation are tax-deductible, subject to limitations under the code. We welcome gifts of appreciated stock for which you may deduct full market value for income tax purposes. The Stuttering Foundation is a recognized 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization and your contribution is tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Please check with your financial advisor, employer, and/or legal advisor for details.

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (the CAA) signed into law on December 28, 2020, maintains and expands the charitable contribution incentives originally enacted by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (the CARES Act).

The enhanced charitable contribution deduction benefits apply solely to qualified charitable contributions, which are contributions made in cash to a public charity or "50% charity." For these purposes, this includes a private operating foundation, such as the Stuttering Foundation.

THE LATEST CONTINUING EDUCATION OFFERINGS FROM THE STUTTERING FOUNDATION

CLUTTERING ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT WITH DR. KATHLEEN SCALER SCOTT

Dr. Kathleen Scaler Scott, Ph.D., CCC-SLP, BCS-SCF, joins host Sara MacIntyre, M.A., CCC-SLP, for an in-depth discussion on the assessment and treatment of cluttering. In this episode, Dr. Scaler Scott breaks down the differential diagnosis process using the LCD definition, provides a comprehensive overview of assessment and treatment, and shares clinical examples and key considerations along the way. Packed with practical insights, this episode will leave listeners feeling more confident and ready to apply what they've learned immediately.

NEURODEVELOPMENTAL MARKERS OF CHILDHOOD STUTTERING

Developmental stuttering disrupts speech communication, one of the most fundamental human actions. Affecting 5% of preschool-aged children and 1% of the general population, stuttering can lead to severe psychosocial consequences throughout a person's lifespan. Over the past three decades, neuroimaging studies of both children and adults who stutter have begun to provide significant insights into the neurobiological bases of this complex, multifactorial neurodevelopmental condition. In this talk, I will present updated behavioral and neuroimaging research findings from studies of young children that shed light on the potential neural bases of stuttering persistence and recovery.

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STUTTERING FOUNDATION Q & A:
SHALOM GOODMAN

COLLECTIVE KINDNESS

Shalom Goodman is the Executive Director of Collective Kindness, a compassionate and strategic approach to breaking the cycle of poverty for good.

Where you are from, where do you live now?

I was born in St. Louis and grew up in Chicago. I currently live in Brooklyn, NY.

What do you do?

I help others. I opened a nonprofit called Collective Kindness that assists families that are struggling and help them get back on their feet, as well as work as an SEO Advisor. Previously I served as an SEO Editor at the WSJ and Business Insider.

Tell us about you and your family?

I'm the youngest of four. I'm an uncle to 14 nieces and nephews. I'm a natural extrovert. I love being around people and meeting new people. Some might call this ironic, with me having a stutter. But it has never stopped me. I love playing basketball, I love skiing, but my favorite is playing on the floor with my dear son, Elisha.

What are your passions?

I'm passionate about helping others. I feel that life is too short and I try to focus on, as the term coined by David Brooks goes, focusing on eulogy virtues instead of resume virtues.

How have you been successful in your career?

I don't like the term successful, since most people equate success with money. I feel that success is the constant struggle to do what is right. And I feel successful with not allowing my stutter to hinder me from achieving my dreams, whether it be interacting in meetings with the biggest editors during my time at the WSJ or just interacting with clients we are helping now at my nonprofit.

Do you remember when you first began to stutter? I have videos of me stuttering from as far back as age two. I have recollections of being a child and not being able to flow freely with my words, but it was only when I became a teen did I fully understand what it meant to be someone who stutters.

Does it run in your family? Who else stutters? It does run in the family. My grandfather, who passed away a few years ago, had a slight stutter, and his father, my great-grandfather, stuttered as well. But I'm the only one in my extended family who stutters.

Did you seek treatment? Did it help? I have been through speech therapy since I was a toddler. I've tried all kinds of methods, programs and devices. How it usually worked was that when I was in the comforts of my speech therapist's office, I spoke smoothly and practically fluent. Since I was lucky enough to have a pretty nice stutter, it seemed that once I left, it was terribly difficult to transfer those skills to the "real world." The most impactful therapy happened when I was around 20 years old. I had spent most of my late teen years avoiding the topic, not allowing anyone to even breach the topic. But when I met Dr. Phil Schneider, an incredible SLP and a legend in the stuttering field, changed my view. He taught me how to shine and embrace myself, stutter and all. It can be summed up in these terms: Better to speak freely and stutter than be silent and fluent.

I have been on a quest to be an advocate for having disfluency and not allowing it to hold me back. I give speeches. I am sometimes the loudest person in the room. I make phone calls. Do I get hung up on at times? Sure. But I'll call back and explain that I stutter. Hang up again? I'll call again. I have a voice. And if Joe Biden, James Earl Jones and Alan Rabinowitz all can have successful lives and careers, I will do the same!

Tell us about your experience with stuttering as a child. I was lucky enough to be able to make sure that bullying me for how I spoke wasn't cool. I was so open about it and "owned it" to such a degree that you weren't able to mock it. Once, during choir practice, someone kept on interrupting, so I called him out. In response, he mocked my speech. Without thinking, I smacked him across the face and took off running before he could catch me. Looking back, I don't condone it, but in that moment, it was my way of standing up for myself. Fast forward to today—he's one of my best friends and a successful doctor.

Has your stuttering gotten worse or better since you were younger? How? I feel that it goes in phases. There are months or even years when it's more flowing, and other times when it's tougher. I'll be raw and share that it seems that the more confident and secure I am in myself, the better my speech will be. Right when I got the job offer to work at the WSJ, I remember my speech was so very smooth. I was flying on the moon.

How did/does stuttering affect you in your career? I have found that it helps me. It makes me unique. I'll never forget a colleague once told me, "Shalom, we preach being kind and thoughtful and the virtue of equality, but it's not always easy to implement on the daily. Speaking to you might take an extra second, but it's so darn worth it." You'll hear me talk. It'll be bumpy, but I say exactly what I want to say, and you'll remember it.

What do you do to control or manage it, if anything? Sleep is super important. Confidence is big for me. Pausing is something to my advantage. And I disclose my disfluency before meeting someone new. This helps "break the ice."

What are the biggest challenges stuttering has presented to you? People in the broader world still don't fully understand stuttering. Once, in a Vegas hotel, I approached the front desk and stuttered. The employee laughed and mimicked me. I knew this was pure ignorance. Instead of letting it slide, I went into strong mode—I asked to speak to the manager and explained what had happened. The manager apologized profusely, offering free shows and perks. I declined but made it clear that this employee needed to be educated—people don't always speak fluently, and that's just reality.

I have a rule: Anyone is allowed one initial reaction to hearing someone stutter. I get it—ignorance exists. Maybe they've never met someone who couldn't just "get the words out." But once they know it's a stutter and they still choose to mock, there's no kind excuse for that. At that point, they're just a rude person—and I have no interest in speaking to them anyway.

What is your greatest accomplishment with regard to stuttering? Not letting it hold me back. Saying what I want to say. That's the biggest win you can aim at. Being fluent or flowing with your speech is great, but if that comes at the expense of being authentically you and saying exactly what you want to say, then I don't call that an accomplishment. In fact, it's the opposite of that.

Based upon your experiences, what would you like to tell children who stutter? It's tough. People still don't understand what it means. "Take your time," "relax." People are so very misinformed about stuttering. My advice is to be easy on yourself and try not letting it hold you back from achieving your dreams. And use it to your advantage.

I was once part of an oral school exam where the principal came to test our class as a group. I didn't know the content very well, so I stuttered extra on purpose so he'd give up and just give me a pass and move. Let me have one great perk!

Based upon your experiences, what would you tell parents of children who stutter? I'd recommend speaking to SLPs that are not just obsessed with attaining fluency, but figuring out how to make sure their child is being truly himself and saying what he needs to say. And create a home atmosphere where your child can be heard. Also super important to not be too easy on your kid. They're just like everybody else, but they need an extra moment to get the words out. Give them that space, but don't pity your child.

What else should we know? When I was dating my now-wife, Lilach, I asked her, "You know stuttering is genetic, right? Our kids might stutter." She looked at me and said, "Shalom, if they do, they'll have the best role model in the world—someone who stutters but never lets it hold him back from accomplishing his dreams." That was super powerful and empowering.

DEAR SFA:

KIDS' LETTERS TO THE STUTTERING FOUNDATION

We'd love to hear about your dreams, your victories, the fears you have faced, the ways you've been challenged, or anything you wish people knew about stuttering! If you would like to send us a picture, letter, or poem, please e-mail us at info@stutteringhelp.org. We'll make sure you get a permission slip to fill out the needed information. We attempt to answer every child's letter personally, so be sure to include a contact name and postal addresses for either a parent or the SLP of the child along with your submission.*

***Please mail original artwork submissions on plain, unlined paper. *Photocopies, scans and faxes of artwork cannot be accepted.* Colorful markers and crayons are encouraged as pencil drawings can be difficult to reprint.* If you'd rather submit a photo, it can be mailed directly along with your permission slip and letter; digital photos can be sent via email.

For more information and/or to receive a permission form via email, please contact us at **info@stutteringhelp.org**.

Mail your letter, permission form, original color artwork and/or photographs to:

The Stuttering Foundation
P.O. Box 11749
Memphis, TN 38111-0749

Hi, my name is Kalli. I am 10 years old. I live in Plymouth, Massachusetts. I love to play basketball and volleyball. Stuttering is not a bad thing. Even famous singers stutter like Ed Sheeran and Kendrick Lamar. Don't let people make you feel like you do not matter because you do matter. Even our old president Joe Biden stutters. Fun fact about me: I started to stutter in kindergarten, then it stopped in 2nd grade, then it came back in 4th grade, and I have had it ever since. Don't let haters get to you, you are perfect in your own way.

Kalli, 10, Plymouth, MA

My name is Emylia-Ann. I am a person who stutters. I am 7 years old. I love speech class with Ms. Megan because it is so fun. I like to go outside and play on the playset my dad built. I like to play on the trampoline.

Emylia-Ann, 7, Greeley, CO

Hello everyone, my name is Osinachi. I have been stuttering for 3 years. I like to draw, play games, and code games. I'm in 3rd grade. Stuttering is unique and is a part of me. It is my superpower! An interesting fact I learned in speech is that there are more than seven million people worldwide who stutter! Including celebrities and presidents! I go to speech twice a week and it has taught me to be confident about my stuttering and how to pronounce my R's.

Osinachi, 8, Plano, TX

Hi my name is Alex. I am 9 years old. I Live in Chagrin Falls, Ohio. My favorite things to do outside of School are to play BasketBall with my friends and Video games, I Like NBA2K25. My favorite subjects in School are Math and Social studies. I Have one Pet her name is rosie and she is a dog. I have a stutter. My favorite strategies are the slide (I relax my mouth and let the sound out easier) and cancellation (I stop and start over.)

I used to stutter a lot but now I stutter less Because of speech therapy, one day when I grow up I want to be the in the nba.

Alex, 9, Chagrin Falls, OH

Hello, my name is Kaleb. My favorite thing to do is to play football. I love to play video games too! My favorite video game is NHL 25. I am 10 years old. I have a little sister named Kaimbree. I go to school in Hewitt, TX. I started stuttering in pre-k, but now I am in 4th grade.

Kaleb, 10, Hewitt, TX

Sincerely - Kaleb Hewitt, Texas

Hi, my name is Teagen, and I am in third grade. I am nine years old, and I have a speech teacher. She is the best speech teacher in the world. I love to do gymnastics and to read. I also love to ride horses. They are so tall! When I stutter, I sometimes put my head down, but it is okay to stutter. Here are some tips about stuttering. Number one, pause. Number two, stretch out the hard sounds. Those are some tips about stuttering. Have a great day!

Teageh 9, Mount Pleasant, TN

Hi! My name is J.J. I'm 9 years old and I live in Gulf Shores, AL. I like to play video games. My favorite game is Sonic 3, and my favorite movie is Sonic 3. I also like to sew and make my own stuffies. Right now, I'm working on making Golden Sonic, Stitch, and Angel from the movie "Stitch." I like to draw and paint characters from movies, like Star Wars stuff and Stitch. My favorite speech trick is full breath because it lets me feel better when I stutter. Stuttering is annoying to me, but it's not a big deal in my life. It's never gonna get in your way of whatever you do in life.

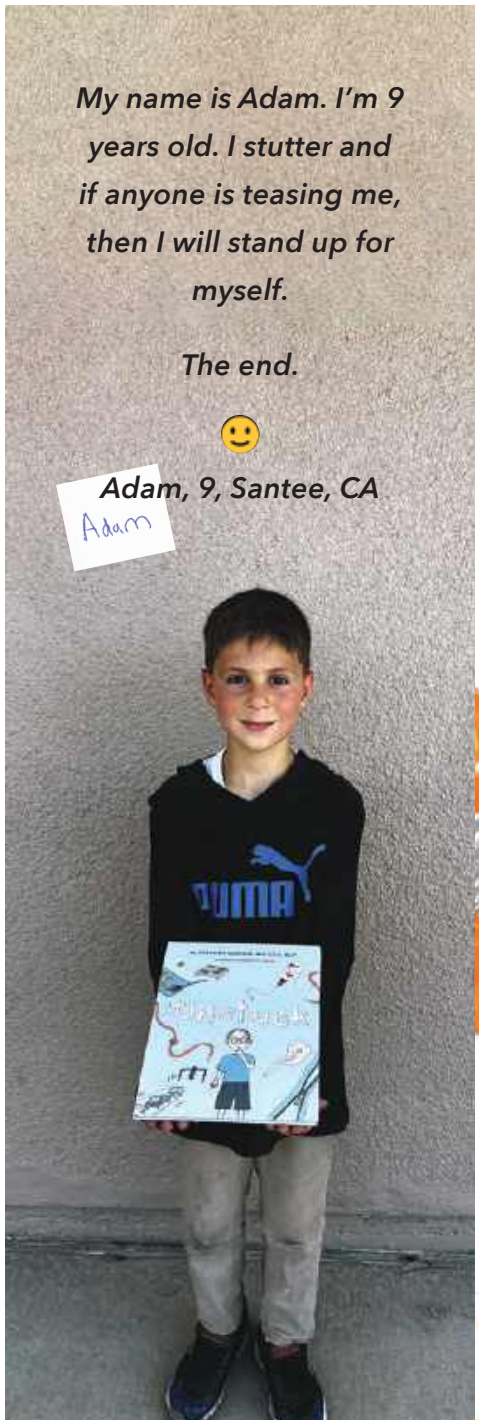
J.J., 9, Gulf Shores, AL

My name is Adam. I'm 9 years old. I stutter and if anyone is teasing me, then I will stand up for myself.

The end.

🙂

Adam, 9, Santee, CA



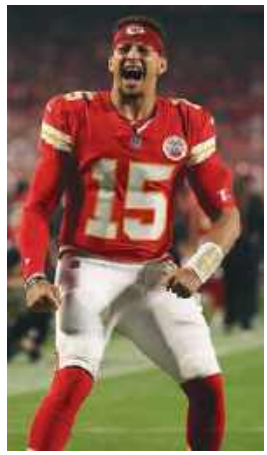


Photo by Jamie Squire/Getty Images

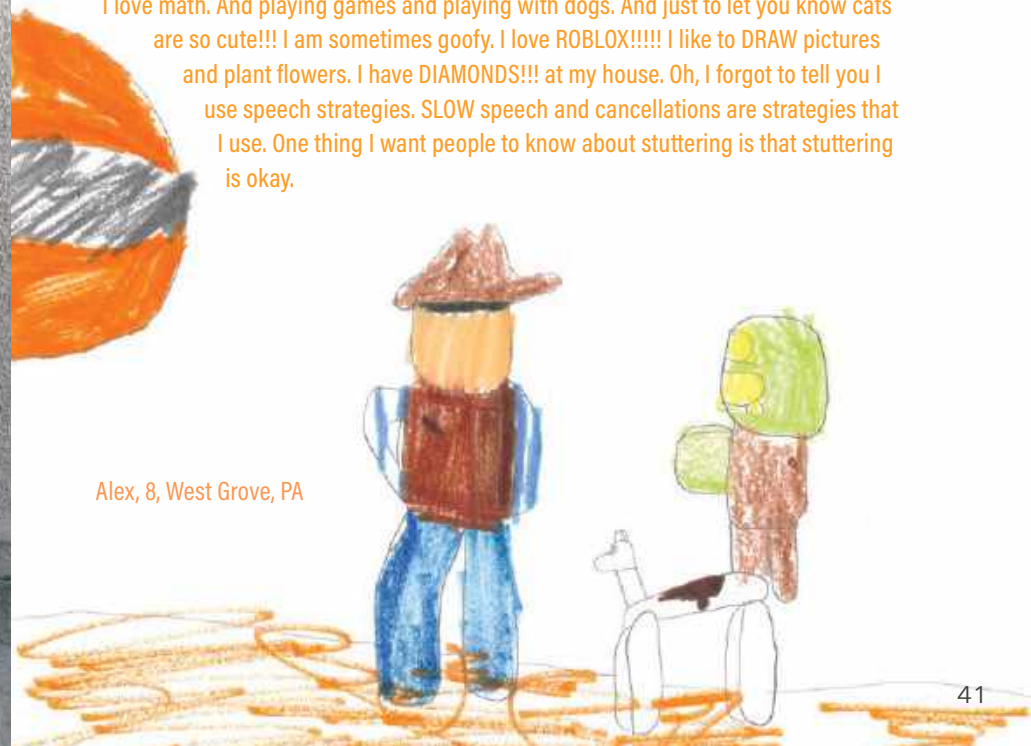
My name is Desten, and I am 11 years old.

My favorite football player is Patrick Mahomes. I like Patrick because he is a good football player, and he makes me feel better about talking. When I grow up, I want to play in the NFL for the Kansas City Chiefs.

Sometimes I get worried about talking on the microphone in the NFL, but I know my strategies, and I can use them while I speak in the mic. It's ok to stutter because everyone is different in their own way.

Desten, 11, Waco, TX

Hello, my name is Alex I am in 2nd grade. I am in speech class because I stutter a little. I love math. And playing games and playing with dogs. And just to let you know cats are so cute!!! I am sometimes goofy. I love ROBLOX!!!!! I like to DRAW pictures and plant flowers. I have DIAMONDS!!! at my house. Oh, I forgot to tell you I use speech strategies. SLOW speech and cancellations are strategies that I use. One thing I want people to know about stuttering is that stuttering is okay.

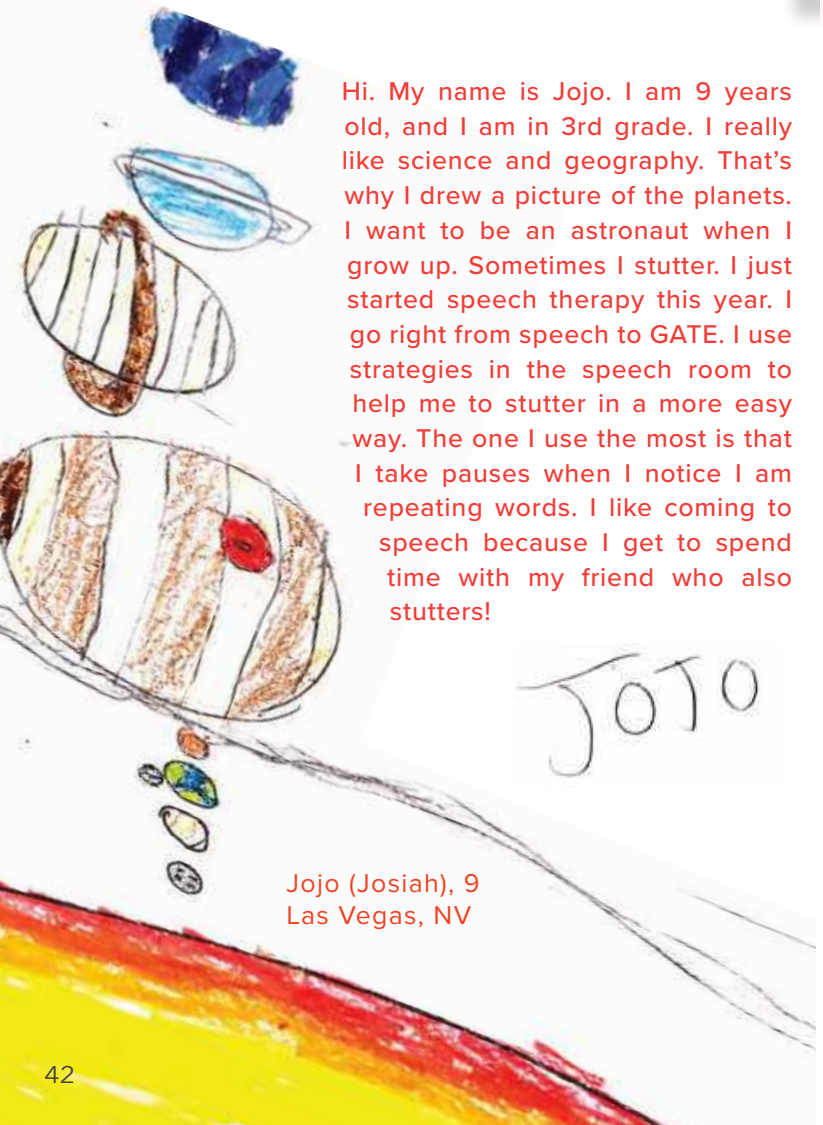


Alex, 8, West Grove, PA

Hi, my name is Adelyn. I am in 6th grade, and I am 12 years old. My favorite sports are volleyball, basketball, softball and track. Dance is another one of my favorites. At dance I do jazz and ballet, and I used to do tap and clogging. I started stuttering when I was in first grade and ever since I have been taking speech therapy. Some tools that help me are light contact and sliding through my words. I learned that stuttering is just a thing and that most people sometimes do it. If you are ever bullied, you can say, "okay, and maybe you can come back when you can stutter better than me." I have a lot of friends that support me, and you do too.

Adelyn, 12, Sutton, NE

Quinn, 10, Irvine, CA



Hi. My name is Jojo. I am 9 years old, and I am in 3rd grade. I really like science and geography. That's why I drew a picture of the planets. I want to be an astronaut when I grow up. Sometimes I stutter. I just started speech therapy this year. I go right from speech to GATE. I use strategies in the speech room to help me to stutter in a more easy way. The one I use the most is that I take pauses when I notice I am repeating words. I like coming to speech because I get to spend time with my friend who also stutters!

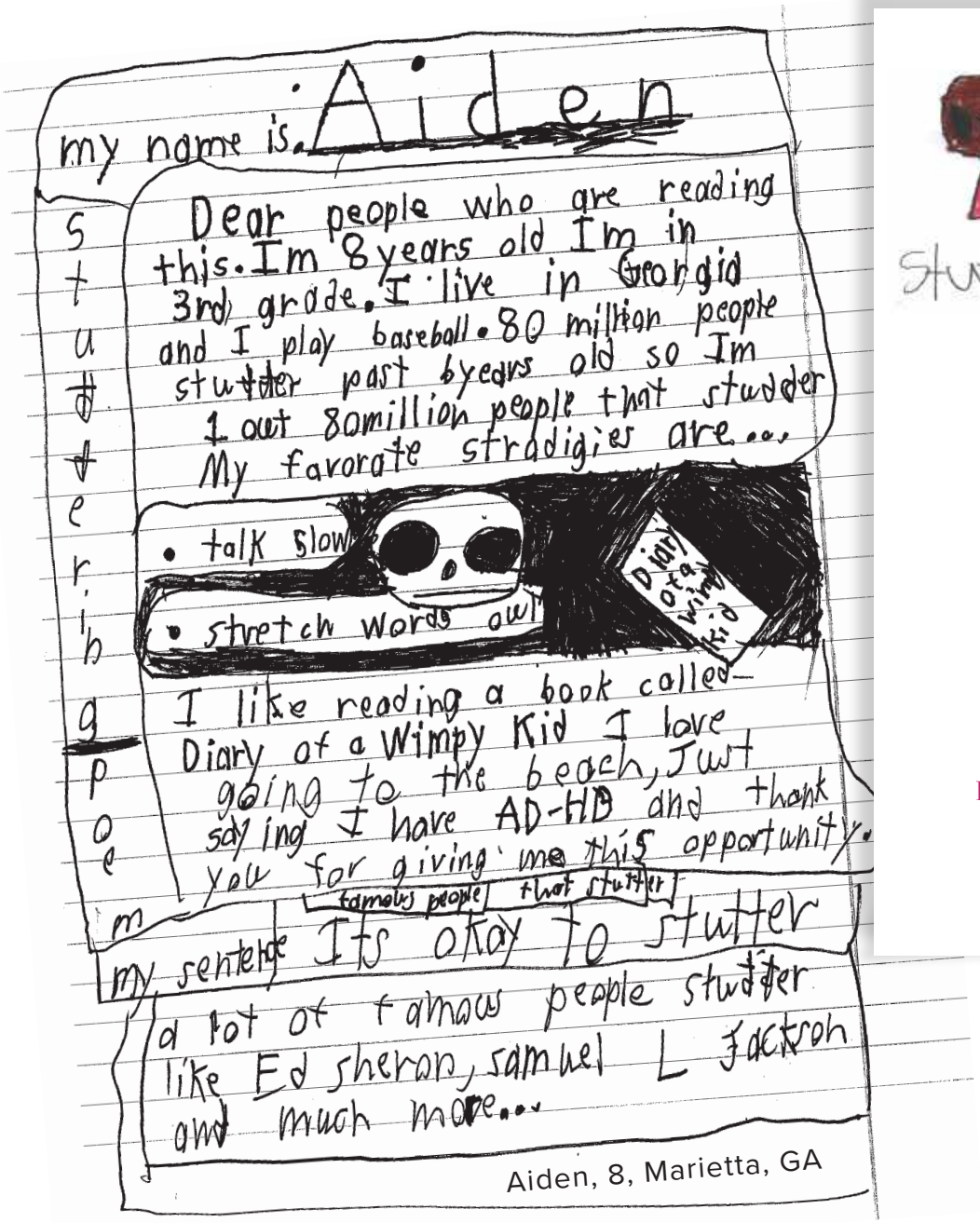
Jojo (Josiah), 9
Las Vegas, NV

EA SPORTS COLLEGE FOOTBALL 25

Hello, my name is Donovan from Peachtree Corners, Georgia. A little bit about me is my favorite game is College Football 25. My favorite thing to do is play football with my brother. And just like a lot of people, I stutter! My advice for kids who stutter is,

"Never doubt yourself. You can do anything you put your mind to."

Donovan, 8, Peachtree Corners, GA



Stuttering is good

Hi, my name is Myles. My birthday is August 17. My favorite game is Minecraft. When I grow up, I want to be a gamer/YouTuber. My favorite sport is soccer. When I stutter, I feel good, but sometimes I feel nervous. I don't like it when people ask me why I stutter. It helps me when I use turtle talk. I like turtle talk because it helps me not to stutter as much. Some famous people who stutter are Kendrick Lamar and Ed Sheeran. If you stutter, it's okay.

Myles, 7, Rahway, NJ

My name is Nathaniel. I live in Spokane, WA. I'm 10 and I'm in 4th grade. I stutter sometimes. I use pacing to split up my sentences so that I get good breaths. I also stretch my words. Stuttering is part of who I am, and I am proud of myself.

I like Justin Jefferson; he's on the Vikings. I like him because he's a really good wide receiver. I also like Steph Curry on the Golden State Warriors. I like Steph because he has a three-pointer shot and he makes it every time. I have been playing basketball since I was in kindergarten. I am doing Hoop Fest in June for the first time. Hoop Fest is a huge tournament where grownups, teenagers and kids play 3 on 3 basketball on the streets of downtown Spokane. It says it's the largest 3 on 3 tournament in the world and 45 city blocks get turned into basketball courts. If you win, you get a prize and you always get a t-shirt for being on a team. I can't wait for it!

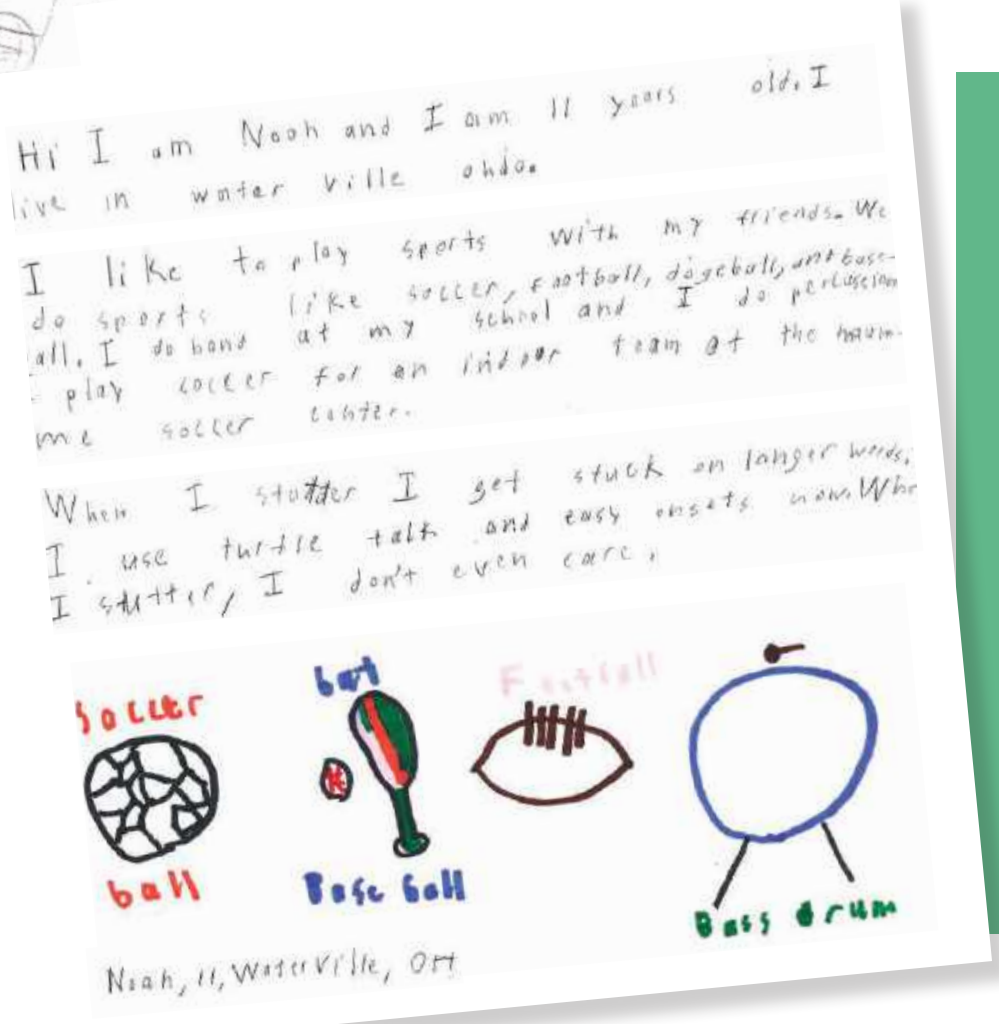
Nathaniel, 10, Spokane, WA

Hi my name is Ainsley.
I am 6six years old. I live in
Plymouth. I Like to DO my nineDOSuk
and i Like to watch T-V with my sista
I Stutter. But I Don't remember when I
Stuttered. And I like to draw.

Ainsley, 7, Plymouth, MA

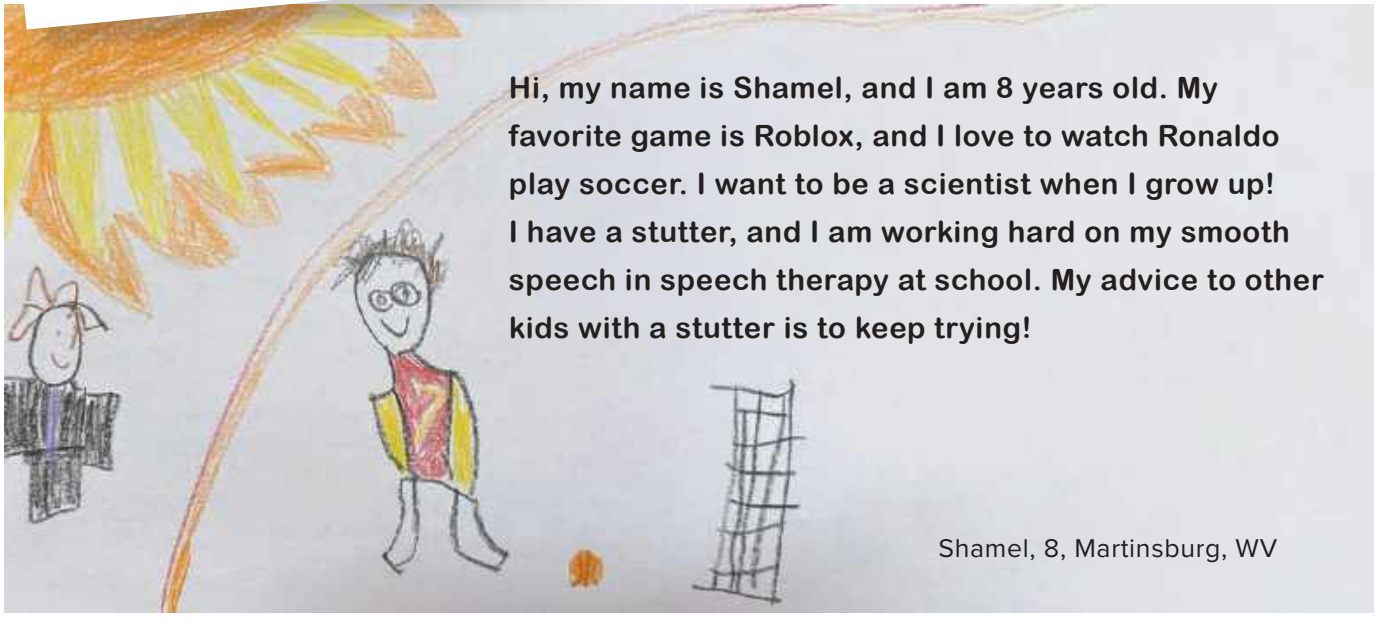
Hello, my name is Sebastian. I like to go see the Chicago Bulls. And the Chicago Bulls game is the basketball game. I like the Chicago Bulls. I think my talking is awesome. When I stutter, I feel out of control. Talking slower and pausing helps me feel easy about my speech.

Sebastian, 9, Fort Worth, TX



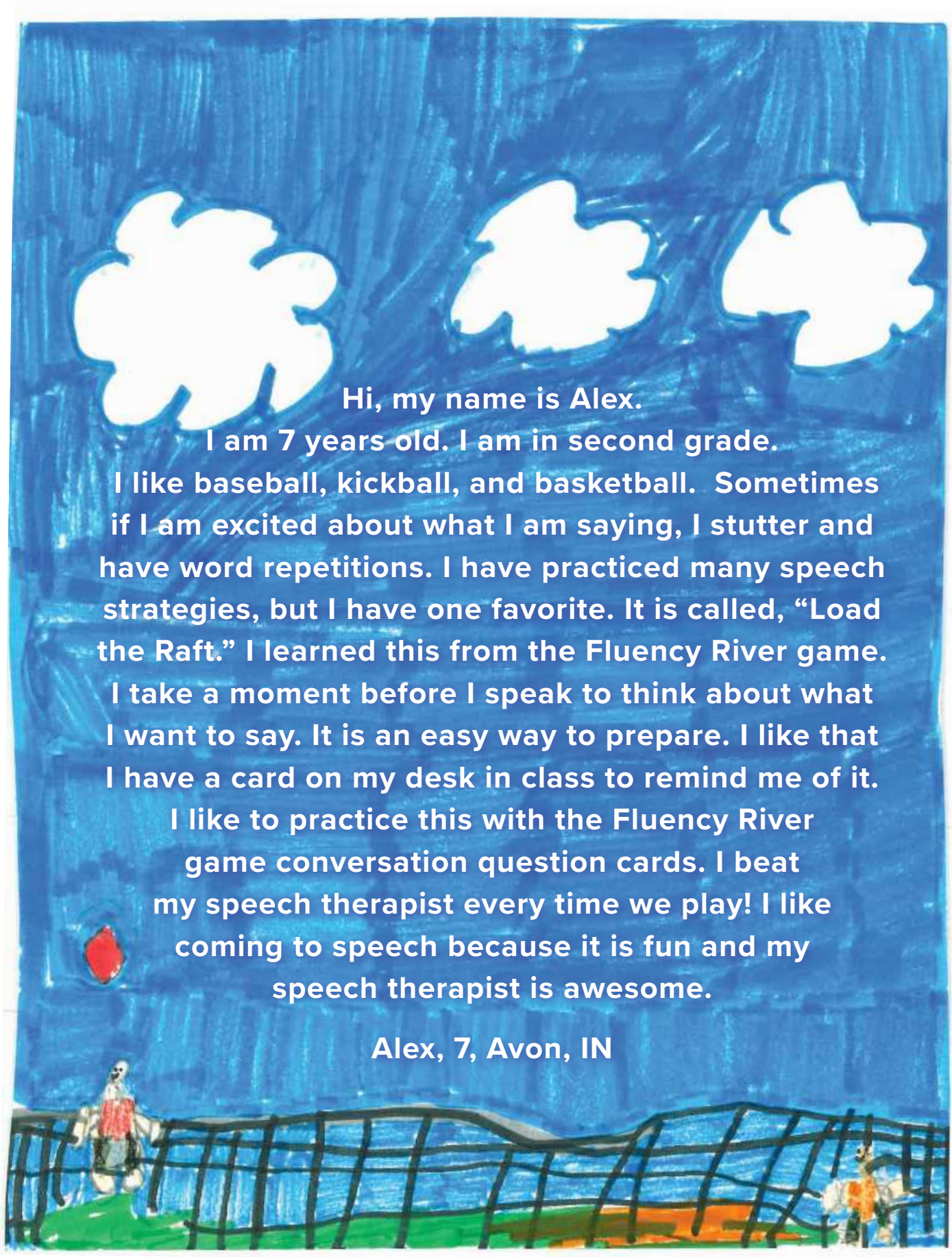
Hi. My name is London, and I am ten years old. I stutter. I am in fourth grade. When I go to speech, I learn how to use strategies to help me. I learned how to stretch my words out and to talk like a robot. I love to draw people, though I am not a fan of sports. I am proud of my stuttering. My dad used to stutter, so that's convenient.

London, 10
Las Vegas, NV



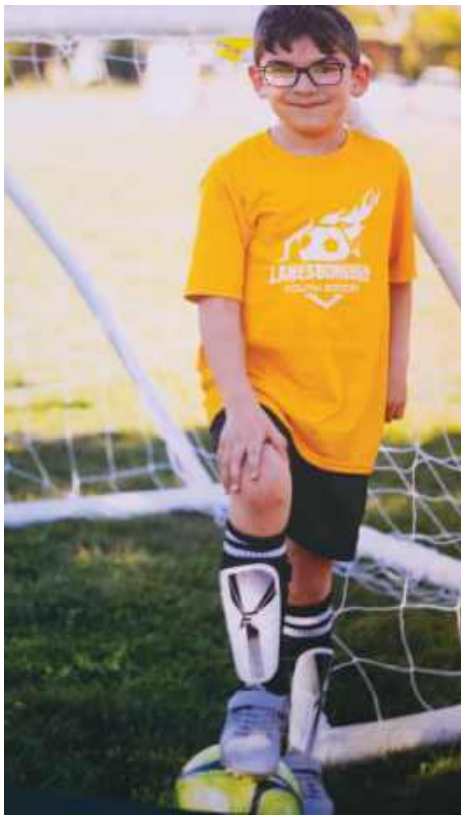
Hi, my name is Shamel, and I am 8 years old. My favorite game is Roblox, and I love to watch Ronaldo play soccer. I want to be a scientist when I grow up! I have a stutter, and I am working hard on my smooth speech in speech therapy at school. My advice to other kids with a stutter is to keep trying!

Shamel, 8, Martinsburg, WV



Hi, my name is Alex.
I am 7 years old. I am in second grade.
I like baseball, kickball, and basketball. Sometimes if I am excited about what I am saying, I stutter and have word repetitions. I have practiced many speech strategies, but I have one favorite. It is called, "Load the Raft." I learned this from the Fluency River game. I take a moment before I speak to think about what I want to say. It is an easy way to prepare. I like that I have a card on my desk in class to remind me of it. I like to practice this with the Fluency River game conversation question cards. I beat my speech therapist every time we play! I like coming to speech because it is fun and my speech therapist is awesome.

Alex, 7, Avon, IN



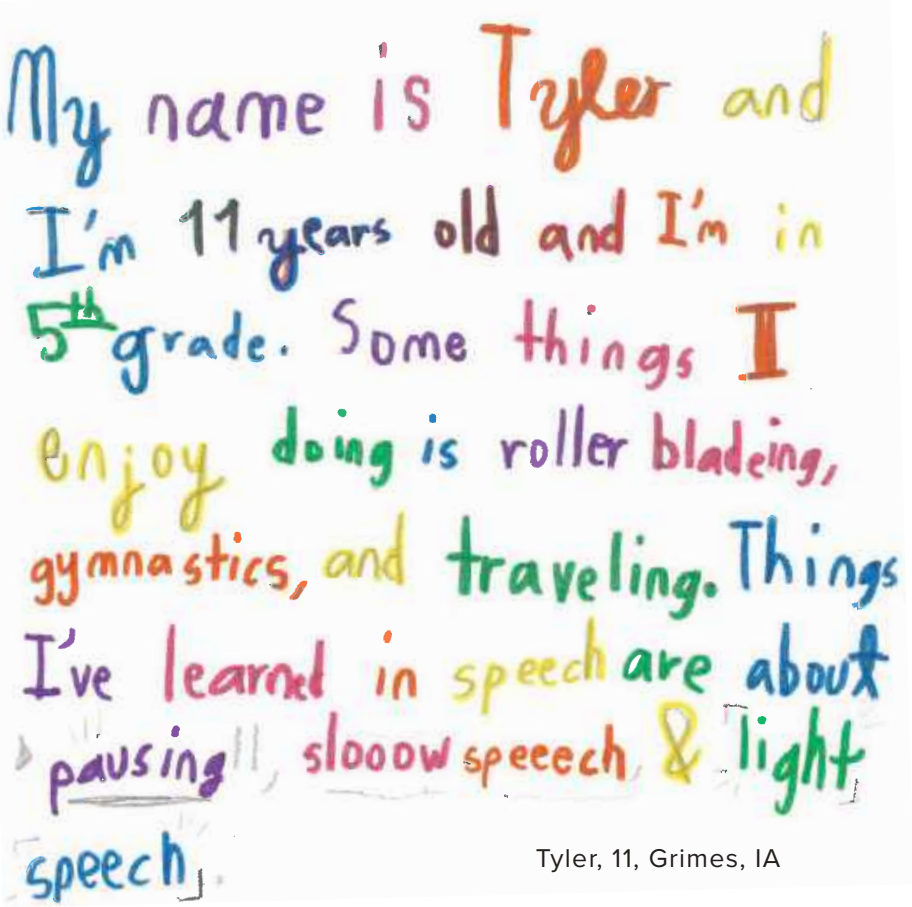
My name is Parker, and I live in Hancock. I am 7 years old. I like adult video games because I do not want babyish video games. I like grown-up games because they are more realistic.

I like playing soccer games. My friend, Beau, plays against me in soccer but we are still friends! I like playing on my big trampoline because it's bouncy and I can do side flips.

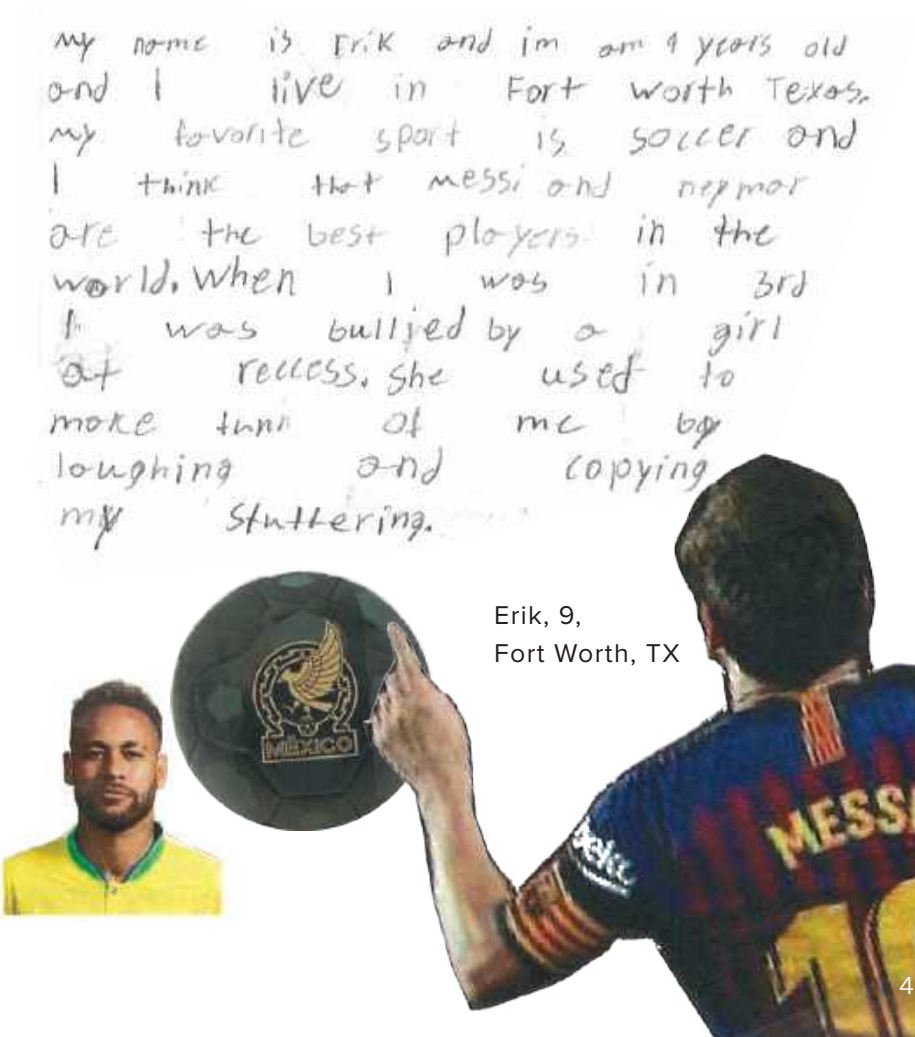
I am okay with stuttering, but I have to know what I'm saying. If I'm excited, cited, like what I just did, I can fix it by going back and saying it again.

It doesn't matter if you stutter or not, you're still great!

Parker, 7, Hancock



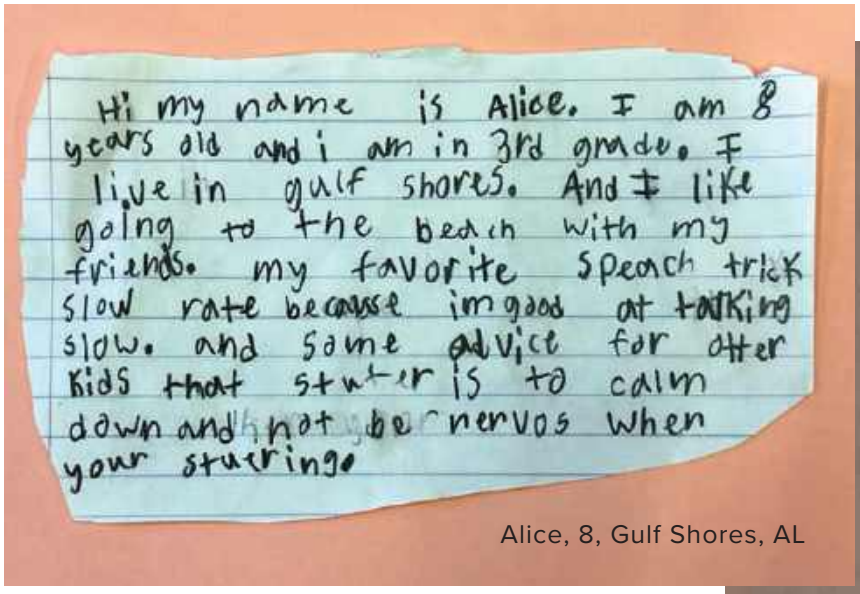
Tyler, 11, Grimes, IA



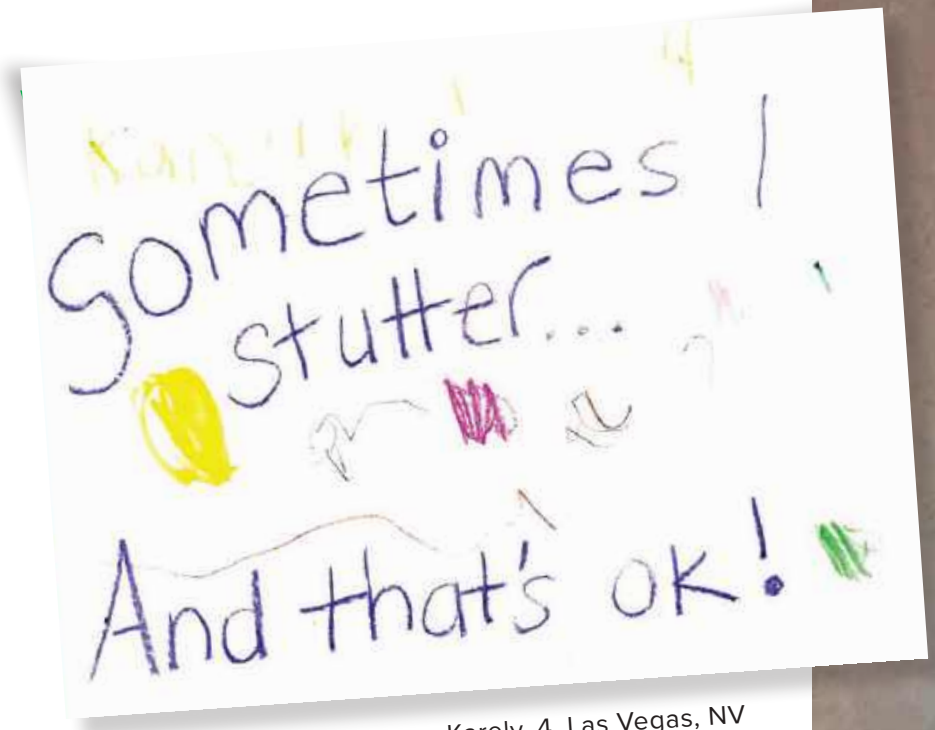
Erik, 9,
Fort Worth, TX

Hi! My name is Ashley. I am 10 years old, and I live in Wisconsin, but I was born in California. I love dogs and do not like cats at all. I have been stuttering since I was 3 years old. I love coming to speech. I go to speech to learn how to feel better about my stuttering. Stuttering is just what I do but I am not bothered by it. You shouldn't be either. Stuttering does not always have to be frustrating. Just try your best to say the words/sounds or try again. People should not make fun of you about it.

Ashley, 10, Milwaukee, WI



Alice, 8, Gulf Shores, AL



Karely, 4, Las Vegas, NV

Hi! My name is Gibson. I am in the fourth grade in Drummond, Montana. I like to play video games, for example, I love to play Madden NFL 25 and Fortnite. I enjoy basketball and football. I started articulation and stuttering therapy when I was in the first grade. I have three things to do to help me. First, I use the selective slow trick. Selective slow is when I stretch out the sounds of the word at the beginning of sentences. Another speech trick is to get your tongue to the correct place and emphasize the placements. I am learning a third trick to use which is pausing if I get stuck. My best advice for speaking is to think before you speak.

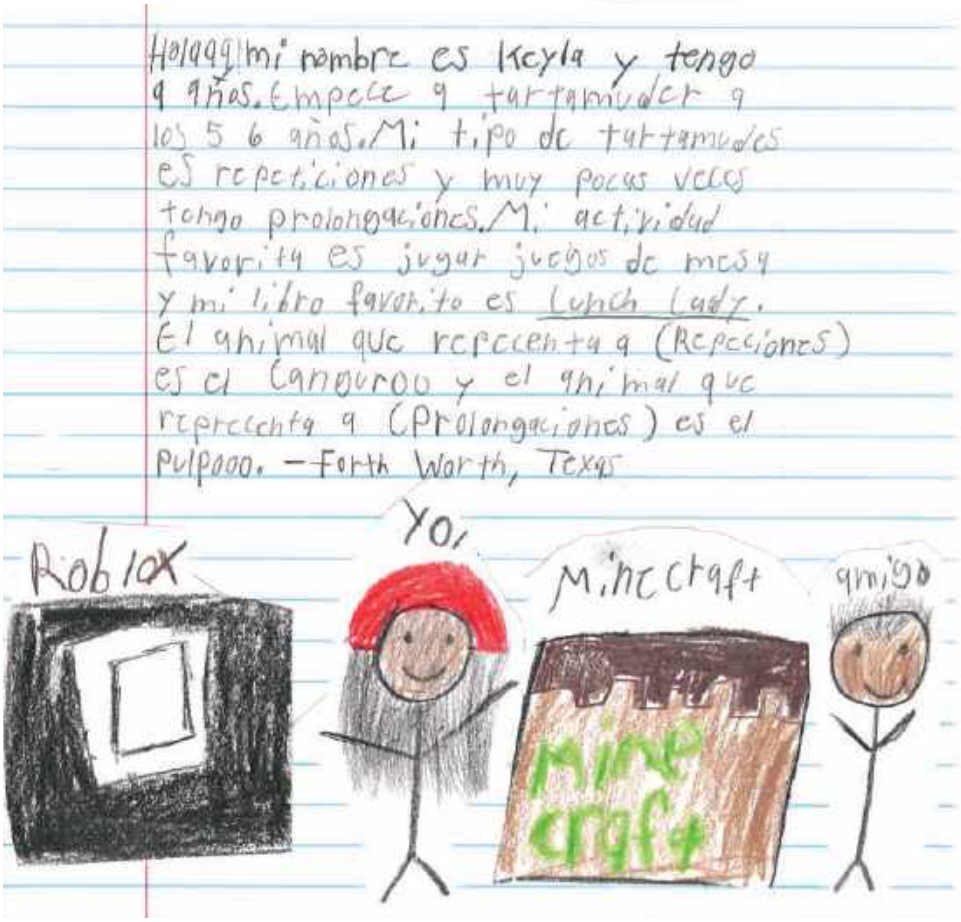
Gibson, 10, Drummond, MT

Hi, my name is Ava. I am 10 years old. I live in Michigan. I love basketball, dancing, and roller skating around my neighborhood. I really have fun drawing and sketching. I stutter a lot. When I stutter, I have what's called a block. It's okay to stutter. I take deep breaths once I stutter. It helps me calm down. It's ok to stutter because you will soon get used to it and be more confident about it. NEVER BULLY because that person might be going through something and you don't know. Always be kind.

Ava, 10, Dearborn Heights, MI

Hello. My name is Julian, and I love soccer. I am 10 years old. I still stutter sometimes. To help my stuttering, I take three deep breaths. When I grow up, I want to be an architectural engineer because I want to draw engineering stuff.

Julian, 10,
Las Vegas, NV



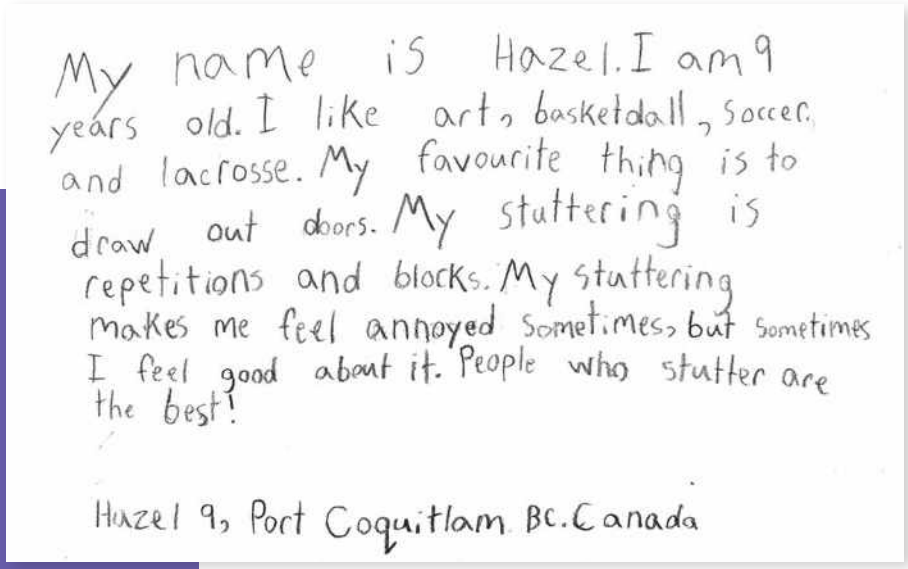
Hi, my name is Keyla, and I am 9 years old. I started stuttering when I was 5 or 6 years old. The type of stuttering I have is repetitions and very infrequently I have prolongations. My favorite activity is playing board games, and my favorite book is Lunch Lady. The animal I use to represent repetitions is the kangaroo and the animal I use to represent prolongations is the octopus.

Keyla, 9, Fort Worth, TX

Hi. My name is Ricardo. I am 8 years old, and I am in 3rd grade. I like to play soccer with my friends and family. I love to play Roblox and Minecraft too.

Sometimes I stutter, but it doesn't bother me that much. When I stutter, I just keep talking anyway because I know that what I say matters!

Ricardo, 8, Las Vegas, NV



My name is Hannah, and I am 12 years old. I am in 6th grade, and I live in Ankeny, Iowa. I like to read books. I read Harry Potter books, and I like to draw. I draw with a pencil on paper for a rough draft. I like to finish my drawing with colored pencils. I like to draw characters from books or TV shows. The thing that is hard about stuttering is that the tension in my vocal cords doesn't let me say the things I want to say. I like to be with my therapy teachers because they taught me how to speak even if I'm stuttering.

Hannah, 12, Ankeny, IA

Hi, I am Xavito and I am 7 years old and I am in 2nd grade. I am in speech class because I have bumpy speech. I have learned strategies so far. My favorite strategy is pausing. My favorite thing to do is play Monopoly Go. I also like Lego, and I have a sister. I feel nervous in Monopoly Go. I completed the sticker book, and they gave me a token, 10,000 dice and 1,000,000,000 of money. If I win a race, they give me a token, a swap sticker, and a purple pack. I was 7 years old, but I am 8 years old now. I got a new dice by completing the prize drop. One thing I want people to know about stuttering is that it is okay to stutter.

Xavito, 8, West Grove, PA

Hello, my name is Zuri. A little about me: I love math, my BFF, and art. Stuttering sounds like, "b f f f f f f f f f f f f f f f f f." My advice for kids who stutter is to tell the person you are talking to, "Wait a minute. I am stuttering and need a little more time."

Zuri, 7, Atlanta, GA

Hi, my name is Kenneth, and I am 9 years old. I like to play basketball, football, and Fortnite. I also like to eat, and my favorite food is McDonalds. My favorite comic book is Dog Man because I like to read about the characters. I read all the comic books, and I also liked the movie. I have 3 dogs and my favorite thing to do with my family is go to fun places in the summer, like the waterpark. I started stuttering when I was in 2nd grade and people started bullying me in 3rd grade. When someone tries to bully you about your stuttering, don't be worried about them. My favorite strategy is full breath because it helps me to stop stuttering and calm down. I also like easy onset and stretchy speech. I want people to know that it is okay to stutter but sometimes it can get frustrating.

Kenneth, 9, Chicago, IL

Hello everyone, my name is Nathaniel. I have been stuttering for 2 years. I like watching football and I like to play football. I am in 1st grade. Stuttering is a part of your body. Stuttering makes me me. There are more boys than girls who stutter.

Nathanial, 6, Plano, TX

My name is Carson, and I am in third grade, and I love playing soccer at recess. Next year, I plan to play on a soccer team. My stutter can make me feel uncomfortable, but I don't let it stop me. My favorite strategy is easy onset.

Carson, 9
Hewitt, TX

Hi, my name is Emma. My birthday is August 20th. I am 7 years old. My favorite games are Toca Boca and Roblox. I also love to read a lot. When I stutter, I feel shy and nervous. Something that helps me is going slow and tapping my finger on my leg. My favorite speech strategy is stretching the word out. I love my speech therapist; she helps me a lot. I do not like when people finish my sentences and when people interrupt me like saying, "Emma, slow down." Just to let you know, my dad stutters and my sister stutters a little bit too. By the way, it's OKAY to stutter!!! If people make fun of you when you stutter, just ignore them and say this in your head, "It doesn't matter because my voice matters."

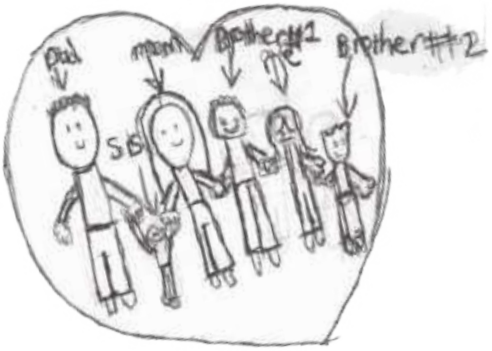
Emma, 7, Rahway, NJ

Hi! My name is Luke and I'm six years old. I live in Gulf Shores, AL. I like to play video games, like Fortnite and Minecraft. I also like playing at the beach and fishing for red snapper. I sometimes fish for crawfish at my neighborhood pond with my dad. My favorite speech tricks are slow rate ("turtle talk") and full breath. My advice to other kids who stutter is to just keep going.

Luke, 6, Gulf Shores, AL

Hi, my name is Payton. I am 8 years old. I like to play Roblox, do gymnastics, dance, color, draw, and read. I like Taylor Swift too; it's ok to stutter. I like to stop, take a deep breath, and say the word again. My brother stutters too. I teach him some strategies. My birthday is on October 19th. I have 2 brothers and one sister. My favorite sport is basketball. I live in Colorado, USA, and I am proud of who I am today.

Payton, 8
Littleton, CO



Hi, I am Major. I am in grade 4 in Gulf Shore, Alabama and I stutter. I LOVE drawing! I like drawing my little bros, I call them Sprunki. My favorite strategy is slow rate because it's easy and it helps me. And if you are stressed about stuttering, it's okay.

Major, 10, Foley, AL

Hi, my name is Collin. I am 11 years old and in 4th grade. I like Dragon Ball and another anime I like is One-Punch Man. I have a couple of friends but here are two – Sam, Brantly. I described my stuttering like this, "half of the word comes out." Some strategies I use are stretchy speech and easy onset. If you stutter, a good strategy is stretchy speech.

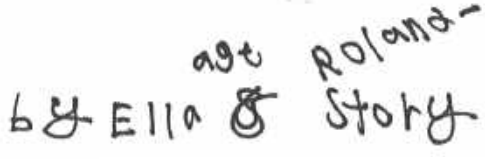
Collin, 11, Maple Valley, WA

My name is Ella, and I live in Iowa. I like my stutter. It makes me who I am.

If someone makes fun of my stutter, I just ignore it. If you stutter, it makes you unique.

When I stutter and get frustrated, I use my breathing techniques to help me calm down.

My speech teacher helps me when I stutter, and I feel strong.



Ella, 8, Roland, IA

Malachi, 8, West Lafayette, IN

Hi, my name is Malachi, and I am 8 years old. I like making comic books. I made this character named Dino Boy. He's a half-dino, half-boy, and ALL hero. I love my character so much, I put him in every comic I make. This character was inspired by Dav Pilkey' s Dog Man. I read Dog Man every day to get new ideas for my comics.

I've learned a lot of cool facts about stuttering, like how President Joe Biden has a stutter. I made an educational video and showed it to a group of college students. In the video, I talked about stuttering, strategies I've learned, things I love, and facts and myths about stuttering. A piece of advice I have for people is that if you meet someone who stutters, you should be their friend!

Hi. My name is Curtis. I am ten years old. I live in Evanston, Illinois. I have a mom, dad, little brother, aunt, one dog named Lady, one snake named Ricky, and two cats named Velma and Louise. I am in fourth grade. I like to play games like Roblox and Minecraft. I like to go to theme parks, zoos, aquariums, and I like animals. I like Wings of Fire. I like to play Creatures of Sonaria on Roblox. I started stuttering near 2022. When I stutter, I usually use pausing. Now I feel better speaking in front of crowds.

Curtis, 10, Evanston, IL

Dear future teacher,

Hi! My name is Isaiah, and sometimes I stutter. That means that sometimes I repeat sounds and words when I talk. And sometimes I have blocks. Blocks are when I can't say a word, but I want to. Some things that I do to help me when I stutter are: I talk slowly, and I stop and then start over. I like it when my teacher lets me finish saying what I am trying to say even if I repeat words or have blocks. Thank you for learning how I communicate.

Isaiah, 8, Las Vegas, NV

Miranda, 9, Fort Worth, TX

My Name is Miranda and I am 9 years old. My favorite sport in soccer. When I stutter I feel happy because it's fun to have stuttering. I can talk well and I can get better at speech. I like the way I talk.

Miranda

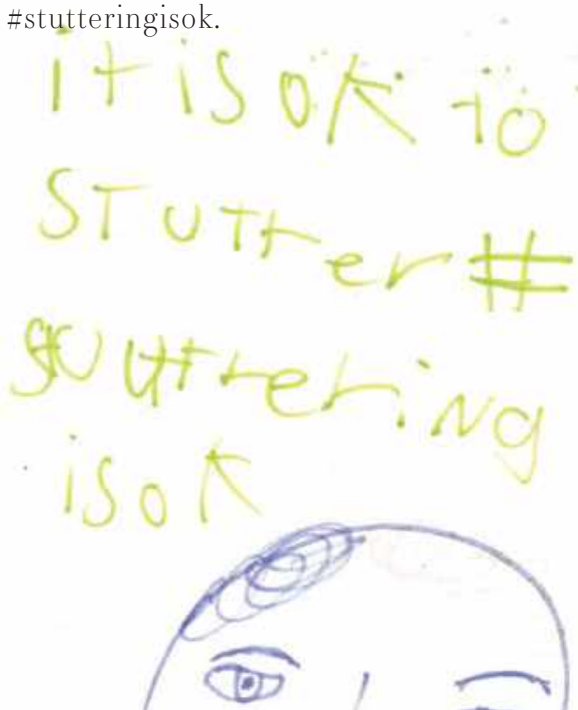
Hi. My name is Cyrus. I am eight years old, and I live in Evanston, IL. I have an au pair, cat, two moms, and a brother. My favorite football teams are the Kansas City Chiefs, the New England Patriots, and the Minnesota Vikings. And I also like Cricket. It is an Indian game. I really like the Delhi Capitals, the Gujarat Titans, and the Kolkata Knight Riders. I really like basketball. My favorite NBA team is the Los Angeles Lakers. And I really like math, the Golden Nugget restaurant, and I really like the library. And I really love my softie toy named Puppa! And I don't stutter a lot because I learned smooth speaking strategies. Sometimes I still repeat words, and I can use the strategy of full breath when I want. As you can tell, I like sports, speech therapy, and school.

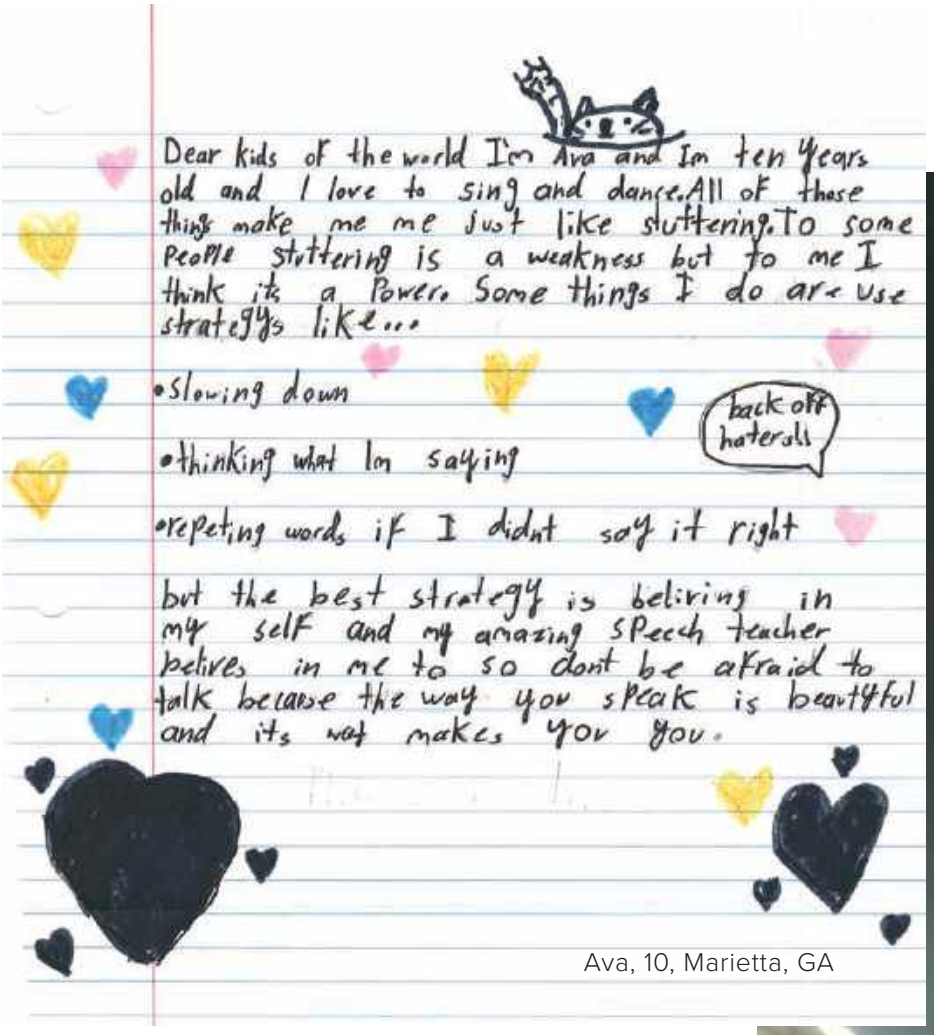
Cyrus, 8, Evanston, IL

Hi, my name is Jeremiah. I am 7 years old. I like to go to NSA (National Stuttering Association) events. I like Roblox. I like hip hop. I like Juice WRLD and Kendrick Lamar. I don't like it when people interrupt me. It is ok to stutter. #stutteringisok.

Jeremiah, 7, New York, NY

Photo Credits: Mike Coppola/Getty Images; Dave Kotinsky/Getty Images for Power 105.1





Ava, 10, Marietta, GA

Hey, my name is Easton. I am 10 years old. I stutter a lot and people make fun of me for that. I saw on a show that if you think about stuttering you will stutter but if you don't focus on that, you won't stutter. I don't let it bother me because famous people stutter like Joe Biden, Ed Sheeran, Elvis, Kendrick Lamar, Shaq, Tiger Woods, and many more. When I grow up, I want to go to the University of Florida and be a football player or coach. Also, I'm a die-hard Florida Gators fan.

Easton, 10
Cooper City, FL

My name is Jeison and I'm seven and I like to play Minecraft, and I like Pokémon cards. Stuttering is OK, it is just a different way of talking, and I like talking.

Jeison, 7, Portland, OR

Clark, 10, Provo, UT

My drawing shows what it feels like to stutter. The left side is colorful and happy. That's how I feel when I'm being myself—cool, confident, and unique. The right side is black and white and looks sad. That side shows the feelings people don't always see, like being scared, embarrassed, or sad.

I stutter, but that's just one part of me. I made this picture to show that even if someone has something hard, they can still be awesome. Our differences make us unique, and we should treat everyone with kindness.

Hello my name is Jayce. I am nine years old and I like Fortnite, Gorilla tag, and YEEPS Hide and Seek. I use key word emphasis, and selective slowness to help my stuttering. I go to speech therapy and it helps me learn different strategies. I have some advice: if you stutter you might want to try speaking slower and thinking about what you might want to say This has been really helpful to me.

Jayce, 9, Hall, MT

Hi, I'm Isaac. I'm from Manteca, CA. I'm 13 and I'm in 7th grade. I love to dance. I love fashion. I'm very outgoing. Fashion and stuttering are similar if you think about it - fashion is art - a way to express yourself. When I try to express myself in conversation it can feel tricky to get words out. My stutter feels like my throat gets stuck and if I keep trying to force it, I lose my breath. So, I take a deep breath, and I use easy onset. I don't let stuttering hold me back. It's part of who I am. It's something I've had since I was 3. **I would tell others don't let anyone take your groove or steal your shine.**

Isaac, 13, Manteca, CA

Dear 2nd Grade Teacher
I want to tell you about my stutter.
When I stutter, I say things over and over again. Some tools I use to help with my stuttering are taking a deep breath and relaxing my voice. When I stutter, it is helpful you if you do not talk over me. Did you know that there are no drugs or medisuine to treat stuttering? Also over 80 million people in the world stutter. Some other things about me are that I am kind, caring and helpful. I like to spend time with my family and friends. Thank you for Reading

Sincerely,
) Lorelei

4-10-25

Lorelei, 7, Mt. Pleasant, MI

continued from page 4

Over the next few years, I just kept sending in applications and I thought, 'man, I truly feel like one day I'm going to get to play this game.'

Over the next 10 years or so, I applied and every other year or so I would get a phone call from someone on the casting team and thought, 'if I could just make it and talk with one of the executive producers from the show, I know I'm going to get on.'

In 2022, I got this random text message, and it was from one of the casting agents. I was confused because I hadn't really sent in an application recently. So, then we go through the whole application process and ultimately it just didn't end up working out and I'm thinking, 'here we go again!'

I was over this dream but in October of 2023, I was out in Austin with some friends and ended up running into a couple of former Survivor players and thought, 'oh, my gosh. I'm a huge fan of the show.' Then maybe a week or two later, I made a random comment on one of the casting director's Instagram stories because he posted about one of the Survivor contestants who just got voted out. I wrote, 'oh, my God, he was incredible.' The next thing you know, I'm in the middle of a CrossFit workout class and the casting director contacted me saying 'oh, my gosh, Mitch, how are you? Are you still interested?' And I'm like, of course I'm still interested in Survivor.

We hopped on a call on Wednesday. He said, 'Mitch, you need to make another application.' And I was like, 'yeah, yeah, yeah. I've already done this so many times, it's not going to happen,' but I submitted the video. The next Monday, he wrote, 'hey, I just showed it to the head casting director. I feel really good about it. I think we're going to show you to the executives,' which was the first time that had ever happened.

A couple weeks later I had an interview with Jeff Probst, and I had an interview with the casting director who interviewed me before, and then the executive casting director, and then a couple of the executives. Those interviews just went incredibly well. I thought, 'well I always said if I could at least meet the executives, then at least these are the people who were ultimately picking who gets on.' Every interview from that point forward just went incredible.

The next thing you know, I'm in L.A. interviewing in a hotel room full of 30 to 40 of the Survivor producers and less than two feet away from me was Jeff Probst, and I thought, 'this interview went as well as it could, and if it's supposed to happen, it'll happen!'

I remember flying home from L.A. thinking I literally crushed that interview. 'If it's meant to be it's meant to be.' And I literally, for about three hours, cried the whole way home thinking, 'I literally have done everything I could to put myself on this show and live out my dreams.'

It truly was so special because I felt from the very first interview I had with Jeff, I just felt really, really confident and comfortable having a conversation with him. He truly just made me feel like he cared about what I was saying and not how I was saying it. From that first phone call all the way to the end of the show, he just created a space for me that made me feel like I could just openly stutter.

GETTING CHOSEN FOR THE SHOW

I was at school, and the casting director was like, 'hey, we have to hop on a call, I have a couple of other questions.' I'm thinking, 'what other questions do you have? I have literally told you everything.' I was taking a shower thinking maybe he's going to tell me I'm on it. And I thought, 'there's just no way.'

As soon as I hop on the call, he says, 'Mitch, how do you feel about being on Survivor season 48?'

I truly was speechless. I think I said a couple of cuss words, and then I was in absolute shock. It was this weird moment of being in absolute shock, while at the same time thinking, 'yeah I always knew it would happen.'

Over the next few weeks, I was mentally trying to get ready to head out there. I was in the process of gaining 15 extra pounds, in the gym twice a day and was doing all of these things to be as prepared as I could be. Ultimately, I did not let it really sink in until we were in Fiji the morning of day one, and we were riding in on those boats. And right when we were about to head in to start the show, that was the moment where I said to myself, 'holy cow, I'm covered in chills. All right, here we go. Let's get locked in. This is really happening now.'

The day before I flew out to L.A., I like had an "ugly cry" at one of my favorite restaurants in town thinking, 'this is the moment I've dreamt of, and it's here now. There is no turning back.' I'm about to be on national TV stuttering. I knew it was going to be really heavy, and that I was going to be the first person who stutters who got to play Survivor like that.

That means so much to me personally. I wanted to ultimately represent myself and my family as well as I could. But I also knew that a big community of people were going to be looking at me and I wanted to represent everyone in the stuttering community as well as I could.

"From that first phone call all the way to the end of the show, (Jeff Probst) created a space for me that made me feel like I could just openly stutter."

I ultimately wanted to prove to myself that I am just as capable as anyone else, that I can go out there and play the hardest social game as a person who stutters. I just wanted to show that I am capable of building deep, meaningful connections with complete strangers. I'm able to do all of these incredibly hard things that you have to do as a person who's playing Survivor who happens to stutter.

So, yeah, I definitely knew and understood that there were going to be a bunch of eyes on me.

I just kept reminding myself that every day I make it on this beach, every tribal council I survived, that means there are that many more people who get to watch me and hear more of my story.

Growing up as a person who stutters I never saw someone who spoke like me, who was ever portrayed in a positive way or just a neutral one. I just wanted to show other people that I am a person who stutters, but there is so much more to me than the fact that I sometimes have a hard time communicating. I am incredibly competitive, and I love competing, and I love building relationships with people, and I love telling stories, and I am so much more than just a person who stutters.

THE VIRAL MOMENT

When I was out there and I began talking about what had been happening the last few days, I really didn't think I was stuttering that much in that moment. So, when Jeff brought it up, I was super thankful because it created a moment for me to just naturally talk about the most helpful practices for me as a person who stutters.

I really didn't want to openly talk about stuttering too much in front of everyone because I didn't want it to be a reason for people to want to vote me out because it was this huge thing that, 'oh, my gosh, he stutters, and he has a great story.' I just wanted to keep it as chill as possible. But I am super thankful for that moment because it did get me an opportunity to openly have this conversation with everyone I was playing with at the exact same time.

I got to share that with 4.8 million people who were watching. And I hope that that moment was able to create other conversations that people felt comfortable enough to ask their friends, family or coworkers who stutter about the best way for them to feel supported.

Ultimately that moment was huge. The amount of people who reached out to me afterwards, whether it was other people who stutter or teachers and coaches, so many people were really appreciative of me just openly having that conversation. I hope that conversation will continue to be used to show others the importance of openly asking what other people need for them to feel comfortable and successful.

For me, I wanted to have this experience. I wanted the chance to win a million dollars and to prove what I was capable of doing, and ultimately, I got so much more than that. I just hope that I was able to encourage other people who stutter to know and realize that just because you haven't seen someone who stutters play Survivor or do what you want to do, that doesn't mean it's not possible. It just might mean you have to be the one to go and do it first.

THE BIG PICTURE

Ultimately it came down to me consciously making a choice that I am probably always going to be a person who stutters, and I can choose to let that hold me back or I can choose to let that be something that sets me apart.

I'm so thankful I'm a person who stutters because it has shaped me into the person who I am today. I don't need to apologize for how I communicate, and I shouldn't feel like it is a burden to anyone I ever communicate with. I think just changing how I viewed myself when I was with others was something that was really impactful.

Jeff Probst spoke about me on his On Fire podcast and just hearing that I was the easiest and fastest "Yes" that he had during the casting process was just super humbling. He went on to just talk about how it was because of my vulnerability and my willingness to put myself out there and to go and do something incredibly hard that most people who stutter wouldn't put themselves in.

It was just a good reminder for me and hopefully for other people that when you choose to be vulnerable and you choose to put yourself out there, it ultimately is going to make you stronger through that because you're choosing to do something hard.

I'm so thankful that I continued to apply after all of those years. And it just goes to show you that you truly never know what you're capable of doing unless you're willing to put yourself out there.

BACK TO SCHOOL

The past year has been incredibly wild, but I think one of the coolest things from this overall experience is every day I get to openly stutter in front of 700 kids. What's cool is I have a couple of students who also stutter. Just getting to see my students who stutter see me stutter on national TV and they get to see hundreds of other people watch me do this really hard thing, it's been cool just seeing some of them become a lot more confident and willing to openly speak up at school.

"I really didn't want to openly talk about stuttering too much in front of everyone because I didn't want it to be a reason for people to want to vote me out."

"Regardless of what your dream is, you have to have people surrounding you who are crazy enough to think that you can do it too."

One of my students volunteered to speak at his Christmas Program, and this past week one of my 5th grade students who sometime last year wrote a letter to the Stuttering Foundation, which he brought to school, showed it to me, and then he read it in front of the whole class. It was just so cool. I never would have done that as a kid in the 3rd or 4th or 5th grade.

Just getting to see these kids become so much more confident in who they are as people is truly the biggest gift I could have ever asked for from this whole experience. Just to be able to stutter on Survivor really has impacted so many people.

FINAL THOUGHTS

You have to surround yourself with people who are going to encourage you to do the crazy things that no one thinks are possible. Regardless of what your dream is, you have to have people surrounding you who are crazy enough to think that you can do it too.

If I could ever be of help to anyone, whether you're an SLP or you're a person who stutters, or you have a child who stutters, or you know someone, reach out to me on social media. I would love to be a resource if I'm able.

There are so many incredible resources out there in the stuttering community and I never used any of them. I only used the SLP at my elementary school, and I only started going to speech therapy later on in high school. But there are so many incredible organizations that you could be a part of that truly offer some incredible resources. So, if you find yourself struggling, please reach out to any of them. I truly think that I struggled alone for a really long time when I didn't have to.

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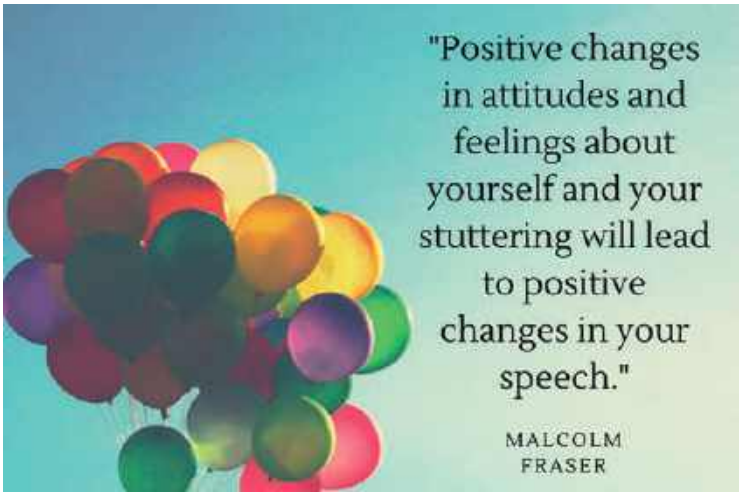

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