

stutter by contacting support groups like FRIENDS and the National Stuttering Association (see the resources section). You can also ask your speech pathologist to schedule some group therapy sessions so you can work with others who stutter.

**Stuttering will hold me back in life.** People who stutter are as smart and capable as anyone else. History is filled with exceptionally smart, talented and successful people who stutter, including: Winston Churchill (the Prime Minister of England during World War II) Albert Einstein (a Nobel Prize winner in physics), Charles Darwin (a scientist who documented the theory of natural selection and evolution), Marilyn Monroe (a popular actress and model), Bob Love (legendary star of the Chicago Bulls), Alan Rabinowitz (a famous zoologist and animal rights activist) and V.P. Joseph Biden.

**Stuttering is uncool and stutters can't be successful.** Many cool people stutter including Bill Walton (an NBA all star and hall of famer and NBC Sports commentator), James Earl Jones (a professional actor), John Melendez (announcer for the Tonight Show), Darren Sproles (a running back and return specialist for the San Diego Chargers), John Stossel (a world renowned television reporter), Carly Simon (winner of an Oscar and Grammy award) and many more.

There are also many cool people who stutter that are still being discovered. Taro Alexander is the founder and artistic director of the Our Time Theatre Company and Camp Our Time, an artistic home for people who stutter. Taro is an actor who has been in STOMP and Law and Order. Eric Jackson is a guitar player in three New York City bands, founder of a self-help group for people who stutter in Brooklyn, co-host of the StutterTalk podcast and is studying to be a speech pathologist. And Caryn Herring has been featured on MTV's True Life series talking about stuttering and is studying to become a speech pathologist.

### Stuttering Foundation tools

- ☞ **Advice to Those Who Stutter** – Helpful information and suggestions for people who stutter.
- ☞ **Stuttering: Straight Talk for Teens** – Available for viewing or purchase through the Stuttering Foundation at [www.stutteringhelp.org](http://www.stutteringhelp.org).
- ☞ **MySpace page** – The Stuttering Foundation's page can be found at <http://groups.myspace.com/stutteringfoundation>.

## Resources

**Supportive Groups** – A great place to meet and learn from your peers who stutter.

- ☞ **FRIENDS**: The National Association of Young People Who Stutter – A self-help organization focusing on teenagers, children, families and professionals. Contact: 866-866-8335, [www.friendswhostutter.org](http://www.friendswhostutter.org), [lcaggiano@aol.com](mailto:lcaggiano@aol.com)
- ☞ **The National Stuttering Association (NSA)** – A self-help organization for adults, teens and children who stutter, families and professionals with local chapters across the United States. Contact: 800-937-8888, [www.nsastutter.org](http://www.nsastutter.org), [info@westutter.org](mailto:info@westutter.org).
- ☞ **The Our Time Theatre Company and Camp Our Time** – Are comprised of young people who stutter ages 8-19, who study acting, singing, playwriting, drumming and dance with professional artists. Contact: 212-414-9696, [www.ourtimetheatre.org](http://www.ourtimetheatre.org), or e-mail [moreinfo@ourtimetheatre.org](mailto:moreinfo@ourtimetheatre.org).

**Films, DVDs, Videos, Podcasts, and eBooks** – A great way to view, hear and learn from other people who stutter.

- ☞ **Do You Stutter: A Guide for Teens** (book; code 0021) – Solid and supportive information for teenagers who stutter. Available at [www.stutteringhelp.org](http://www.stutteringhelp.org).
- ☞ **Self-therapy for the Stutterer** (book; code 0012) – A classic written for teens and adults who stutter. Available at [www.stutteringhelp.org](http://www.stutteringhelp.org) as an eBook or for purchase.
- ☞ **If You Stutter: Advice for Adults** – Available for viewing or purchase through the Stuttering Foundation at [www.stutteringhelp.org](http://www.stutteringhelp.org).
- ☞ **Transcending Stuttering: The Inside Story** (for mature teens and adults) – Available for viewing or purchase at [www.stutteringmovie.com](http://www.stutteringmovie.com).
- ☞ **StutterTalk Podcast** – Available for listening and download at [www.StutterTalk.com](http://www.StutterTalk.com) and via iTunes. Episodes 46 and 47 feature teenagers who stutter.
- ☞ **YouTube.com** – Offers many stuttering related videos which vary in range of content and quality.

**Web sites** – Places to learn about stuttering and people who stutter.

- ☞ **StutteringHomepage.com** – A comprehensive Web site available with a section just for teens.
- ☞ **Stuttering Foundation** – Go to [www.stutteringhelp.org](http://www.stutteringhelp.org) and click on "Teens." to find links to videos, Web sites and much more. Numerous articles and brochures for teens and adults are available including *Why Speech Therapy, Using the Telephone and Electronic Devices*.

**E-mail Groups (electronic mailing lists) and Discussion Forums** – Contact the NSA and/or FRIENDS to find out more about their e-groups. Also, go to [www.StutteringHomepage.com](http://www.StutteringHomepage.com) and click on "Discussion forums and E-Publications."

**Social Networking Web sites** – Social networking Web sites such as [www.FaceBook.com](http://www.FaceBook.com) and [www.MySpace.com](http://www.MySpace.com) offer online groups for people who stutter.

**Finding a Speech-Language Pathologist (SLP)**

- ☞ **Stuttering Foundation** – Go to [www.stutteringhelp.org](http://www.stutteringhelp.org) and click on "Referrals" or call (800) 992-9392.
- ☞ Contact **FRIENDS** or the **NSA** for help finding an SLP near you (contact info above).



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[www.stutteringhelp.org](http://www.stutteringhelp.org) [www.tartamudez.org](http://www.tartamudez.org)

# Stuttering

## Myths

## Beliefs

## Straight Talk



[www.stutteringhelp.org](http://www.stutteringhelp.org)  
[www.tartamudez.org](http://www.tartamudez.org)

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One of the most frustrating aspects about stuttering is that it is a variable disorder. In other words, sometimes you may stutter quite a bit and other times you may not. Because it is so variable and complex, stuttering is often misunderstood. This leads many people to believe myths about stuttering. This brochure discusses some common myths and “debunks” them with straight talk about stuttering.

## Myths, Beliefs and Straight Talk

### **I will outgrow my stuttering.**

Many teenagers and adults who stutter hope or believe that they will stop stuttering one day. Many deny that stuttering can be a problem or may even deny that their stuttering exists at all. Others may want stuttering to go away so much that they simply begin believing that it just might. For example, a 9th grade person who stutters was asked how he was going to manage his stuttering in college. The young man replied, “I won’t stutter in college.” This belief may be due to a couple of reasons, such as denial or hope.

Unfortunately, most people who recover from stuttering do so in early childhood. For example, most people start stuttering between 2-4 years of age, so if stuttering is going to go away by itself, it usually does so by 7 or 8 years of age. If you continue stuttering into your teenage years, you will most likely continue to stutter throughout adulthood. The good news is that there are many options and choices in managing stuttering productively. However, continuing to avoid dealing with stuttering due to denial or a hope or belief that it might simply “go away” tends to make our problems worse, not better.

**I am alone.** Many people who stutter grow up feeling alone and isolated. At this point in your life, you may be the only person you know with a noticeable (overt) stutter. You may also be hiding your (covert) stuttering reasonably well from other people.

But trying to keep your stuttering a secret from the world may be controlling every aspect of your life. Your friends, teachers, or parents may not feel comfortable talking about stuttering and you may not either. It may feel like stuttering is shameful and should be kept a secret. But you are not alone. Most experts agree that close to one percent of the world’s population stutter. This means that approximately 3 million people in the United States stutter and about 67 million people in the world stutter.

**I stutter because I am a nervous person.** While anxiety is not the cause of stuttering, anxiety may make us stutter more severely at times, such as during stressful situations like talking on the phone or speaking in front of a crowd. A frustrating reality about stuttering is that when we want to stutter less, we often end up stuttering more. And when we no longer fear our stuttering, we often end up stuttering less.

**Stuttering is my fault.** While we may not know the exact cause of stuttering, we are certain of two things: stuttering is not your fault, and stuttering is not your parents’ fault. Stuttering is a biological and neurological condition. As such, stuttering is not contagious like the common cold and is not the result of bad parenting, a stressful childhood or a traumatic event. No one chooses to stutter and no one is to blame.

**I am just not trying hard enough.** Just as stuttering is variable, speaking strategies and tools we use to manage stuttering are also variable. Some days, no matter how hard we try, speech tools just don’t work very well. In fact, sometimes it is easier to stutter than to use speaking strategies.

Some people, including relatives or even some well intentioned, but misguided Speech-Language Pathologists, think that because you can control stuttering some of the time, you should be able to control your stuttering all of the time. This myth is both unreasonable and is absolutely not true. If someone asks or expects

you to be “100 percent fluent,” feel free to reply by suggesting that they should never miss a free-throw in basketball ever again!

### **I need to hide my stuttering.**

Have you ever raised your hand in class or walked up to the counter at a fast food restaurant and found yourself changing what you wanted to say? Have you ever stayed home sick from school or refused to answer the phone so that you wouldn’t have to talk? If you have done any of these things, you are reacting in a normal way to a very difficult situation.

For example, one of the authors of this brochure was asked during his freshman year of college, “Where are you from?” Rather than risk stuttering on the *w* in Wilmington or on the *d* in Delaware, the author replied, “I forget.” At the time, it felt like anything was preferable to stuttering. But the reality is that the shame of losing your self-respect is far worse than the shame of stuttering. Saying what you want to say, when you want to say it is the most important thing. Stuttering is always allowed.

**I must speak without stuttering.** Some people who stutter might feel that it is their obligation to their parents, family, friends or even strangers to speak without stuttering. The root of this belief is that we (people who stutter) are broken and believe we are a burden to others. And the reality is that this belief is flawed. As people who stutter, we have a voice, and our voice deserves to be heard. While we may have a social obligation to communicate as effectively as we can, our listeners also have a social obligation to honor our right to freedom of speech.

**I shouldn’t talk about stuttering.** Feeling shame about stuttering is normal. But talking about stuttering with the right people makes things better, not worse. You may be surprised by how many people will want to listen and will want to help. Start by talking with someone you trust such as a parent, sibling, teacher at school or friend. You can meet other people who