



The Stuttering Association for the Young

## Listening Tips

These tips are provided to help make your interactions with a person who stutters a more positive, communicative and supportive experience.

- **Please be patient.** You may be tempted to finish sentences or fill in words, but please refrain from doing so unless you know the other person well and have their permission. Although you may have the best of intentions, completing another person's sentences may feel demeaning. Of course, if you guess the wrong word, the communication difficulties only increase.
- **Try to refrain from comments** such as "slow down," "take a breath" or "relax." To many people who stutter, this advice feels patronizing.
- **Maintain eye contact** and try not to look embarrassed or alarmed. Just wait patiently until the other person is finished talking.
- Be aware that people who stutter often have more difficulty speaking on the telephone. In particular, saying "Hello" can be a special problem. Please be extra patient in this situation.
- People sometimes wonder if it's OK to ask someone questions about their stuttering. This is certainly a judgment call and stuttering should not be considered a taboo subject. However, some people who stutter are sensitive about it and may prefer not to discuss the subject. By following the rules of common courtesy, everything should be fine.
- A person's stuttering sometimes makes it harder to understand what they are saying. If you do not understand what is being said, **don't be afraid to simply say, "I'm sorry, I didn't understand what you just said."** No matter how much of a struggle it was for them to say it, this is preferable to pretending you understood or guessing what was said.
- Let the person who stutters know by your body language and actions that you are listening to what is being said, not how it's being said. **Be yourself and be a good listener.**