



AIS AMERICAN
INSTITUTE FOR
STUTTERING

Speak Freely. Live Fearlessly.

Frequently Asked Questions

Doesn't everybody stutter sometimes?

Actually, no. While all speakers have some occasional disfluencies such as producing interjections, or reformulating what we are saying mid-word, these do not qualify as stuttering. Unlike those with normal disfluency, people who stutter experience a marked feeling of loss of control and uniquely anticipate and try to avoid moments of stuttered speech. Those who stutter often experience negative emotions and thoughts related to their difficulty. In addition, they may limit their participation in certain activities and make important life decisions based on their speech fluency.

Isn't there a device that goes in the ear that immediately induces fluent speech? I'd think everyone would want it.. is it that it's just too expensive?

Delayed auditory feedback has been used to try to help people who stutter. While wearing such a device, the speaker hears his voice with a slight time delay. While many people who stutter do experience short term fluency gains while using the device, the large majority report that the benefits wear off over time. In addition, speakers report that the auditory delay is actually distracting and extremely annoying.

Can a childhood trauma or abusive parenting cause a child to stutter?

We know that stuttering has a genetic basis and that environmental and other factors can influence its expression. Therefore, a childhood trauma or bad parenting might serve to *trigger* or worsen the severity of the stuttering, but neither of these alone would be considered the actual cause.

Why is it that some people who stutter can sing perfectly fluently?

Most people who stutter are fluent when they sing as singing accesses different areas of the brain compared to speaking. In addition, those who stutter commonly stutter much less when they are speaking alone to themselves, or when speaking alone to a pet or infant. While the full dynamics of these observations are still being explored, we do have evidence that the tension and severity of stuttering is often reduced in environments such as this where there is little concern about stuttering or its consequences.

Don't all children go through a period of stuttering?

Pre-school children do typically go through periods of speech disfluency where they repeat words and phrases. This is perfectly normal. However, around 5% of young children show signs of actual stuttering, which include more tense and frequent sound repetitions, prolongations of sounds, and speech blocks, often accompanied by physical tension when speaking. While 75%-80% of children will not continue to stutter, certain factors including family history and overall language abilities influence the chances of recovery. For those children who continue to stutter, specialized therapy can help minimize avoidance and physical struggle, and help the child maintain confidence and participation in social and academic settings.

Aren't all licensed Speech therapists trained in stuttering?

ASHA (The American Speech Language Hearing Association) began to recognize therapists as Stuttering Specialists in 1998. There are currently fewer than 180 such professionals in the US. While all licensed Speech-Language-Pathologists have received some general coursework in stuttering, the large majority are not adequately trained to work with people who stutter. Unfortunately, many such therapists treat those who stutter anyway, often with very poor results.

How is the therapy at AIS unique?

While many therapies focus primarily on physical management techniques, AIS takes a holistic approach to treatment that addresses the physical, emotional, and cognitive aspects of stuttering. Treatment frequency, goals, and activities are individualized according to the unique needs of each person and his or her family. In addition, AIS provides a supportive community where people who stutter can share their experiences and learn from each other. Clients leave treatment with a plan for continued success. Whereas individuals who undergo exclusively physical training commonly report short-term gains followed by relapse, AIS clients report more sustainable improvement and the tendency to continue to make gains over time.

What is involved in therapy?

At AIS, we work with people all across the lifespan. Treatment for young children involves educating the family, helping them modify environmental factors that contribute to stuttering, and to provide an environment that is conducive to effective, free-flowing communication. For children that are more aware of their stuttering, we work to promote feelings of confidence communicating, help the child navigate feelings about stuttering, and work on speaking with less tension and struggle.

For older teens and adults, treatment focuses on helping the individual effectively manage their stuttering in the real world. Clients identify and reduce avoidance behaviors, including the physical “tricks” they have come to adopt when stuttering. They complete extensive desensitization activities on the telephone and out in the world, while working to reframe the negative thoughts and emotions that activate tense, avoidant stuttering patterns. Rather than focus primarily on fluency, AIS helps clients develop effective communication skills and the confidence to say what they want to say, whether they stutter or not.

Is Tele-practice effective for stuttering therapy?

Yes! For most clients, tele-practice is not only convenient, but just as effective as in-person sessions. While it is challenging to work directly with very young children over the internet, parents can still work with a therapist to learn helpful strategies to help their child.

Tele-practice provides the added benefit of being able to bring clients together who would not otherwise be able to attend group sessions because of scheduling issues. Many clients report that this group work is critical to their continued progress.

How do people cover cost for treatment?

Many people who stutter benefit from therapy of the course of several months or even years and that can get expensive. Health insurance coverage is frequently denied for stuttering therapy. Some plans will cover therapy for stuttering if it is secondary to a brain injury while refusing coverage for developmental stuttering, which applies to the vast majority of stuttering cases that begin in childhood.

AIS is committed to making sure that no one be denied top-notch stuttering therapy for lack of financial resources. To this end, we maintain a financial assistance fund made possible by private and corporate donations that provides assistance bases solely on need. Approximately, 45% of our clientele makes use of the fund. AIS awards around \$140,000 in assistance each year.

About the American Institute for Stuttering

AIS is a leading non-profit 501(c)(3) organization whose primary mission is to provide universally affordable, expert speech therapy to people of all ages who stutter, guidance to their families, and much-needed clinical training to speech professionals wishing to gain expertise in stuttering. Our mission extends to advancing public and scholarly understanding of this often misunderstood disorder.

