

Information for Teenagers and Young Adults who Stammer

Stammering, also known as stuttering happens in all cultures and social groups. Research suggests that stammering is caused by differences in the brain where speech develops. Stammering is often hereditary; approximately 60% of people who stammer have another family member who stammers or used to stammer. It is not caused by anxiety or nervousness and it is important to understand that **it is not your fault.**

About 8% of young children go through a phase of stammering, most will stop stammering but some will continue to stammer into adulthood. There are approximately 1.5 million adults in the UK who stammer.

Stammering is very individual and will present differently in each person,

You may:

- Repeat sounds e.g. 'a-a-apple' or words e.g. 'my my my turn'.
- Stretch out sounds in a word e.g. 'mmmmum'
- Get stuck on a sound where no sound comes out for several seconds
- Feel tension in your face
- Use body movements to help get words out
- Avoid certain words or speaking situations

The way you stammer and the way you feel about it can change over time. It might really affect you but this is likely to improve and the less you care about it, the less of an issue it will be.

There is no quick fix or pill that will take away the stammer, but you can choose how you want to manage it. **Don't hold back** or let other people's opinions influence your decisions about your future. Research has show that as someone who stammers you have skills that will be invaluable in your career including resilience, compassion and the ability to quickly assess situations and people. These skills are essential in education, work and socially.

What can help?

- Talk to someone about it- this may be a family member, friend, teacher or a speech and language therapist. You will find that talking about it can give you some perspective and reduce the negative impact it has on you.
- Talk to other people who stammer, meeting others who know what you are going through can be life changing. You can do this through speech and language therapy and www.stamma.org also has information about how you can link with other people who stammer.
- Talk to your teachers about what they can do to support you. There is information on www.stamma.org about changes that can be made which may support you in education such as allowing you to work with people you are comfortable with or giving extra time in oral exams.
- Do not accept bullying or teasing, all schools have a zero tolerance policy to bullying so talk to someone you can trust about what is happening.
- Speech and language therapy. Although there is no 'cure' for stammering, therapy will enable you to explore what works for you. Stammering can affect every part of your life so speech and language therapy will help support you to achieve the things that matter most to you. This may include: learning more about stammering, meeting other young people who stammer, learning strategies to support your speech, exploring thoughts and feelings around your stammer, helping you to reach out to parents, teachers and friends about your stammer and learning more about yourself and how you can reach your potential.

For further information and support visit:

- www.stamma.org: for information and support
- **Stambassadors** connects people from the world of work with young people who stammer, sharing their stories and inspiring young people to think BIG when they are considering career choices. Visit <https://actionforstammeringchildren.org/get-involved/stambassadors>
- The British Stammering Association **Facebook Support Group**. This is a closed group, open for anyone aged 13 or older.
- Ring the free, anonymous and confidential British Stammering Association helpline on: **0808 802 0002** (Open weekdays 10am-noon; 6pm-8pm). Call to off load, to talk through any concerns, to access help and support or to practise speech techniques or interviews.