

Relaxing the Stutter

Stuttered speech has too much tension in it. With practice, you can reduce that tension. *Relaxing the Stutter* is one way to get that practice. Like *Catching the Stutter*, it's a strategy that's only used inside the speech therapy room.

Relaxing the Stutter does a couple things: It gives you a chance to figure out what you're doing when you stutter, and it shows you that it's possible to change how hard you stutter.

How to practice Relaxing the Stutter:

1. First, you'll purposefully stutter on a word with 100% tension. (You're going to try to stutter the way you ordinarily would.)
2. Then you'll repeat the same word with half as much tension (50%). You can also say the word a third time with 25% tension.
3. As you work with these levels of tension, pay close attention to what the stuttering is like. Try to answer these questions:

What kind of stuttering was it?

Where was the tension?

What part of your speech system was involved?

How did it feel?

NOTES:

As you practice this strategy with a variety of words, you'll learn a lot about what happens when you stutter. You'll also see that you can change your stuttering behavior and stutter in a more relaxed way.

Be aware that your *pretend* stuttering may turn into *real* stuttering. If it does, don't worry. This just gives you another chance to figure out what's happening.

And that's a good thing because if you're going to change your stuttering, you need to know what you're dealing with.



Sometimes you can try to temporarily hold on to a moment of stuttering so that you have more time to tune into the tension in your speech muscles. Even though this may feel a bit uncomfortable at first, if you can “stay with” the stuttering in this way, it helps you to see what's going on.

After you've practiced *Relaxing the Stutter* for a while, you'll begin to get more comfortable with your stuttering. You'll see that it's *not* some mysterious thing that takes control of your mouth.

In fact, stuttering is something that you can explore, work with, and change.

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