

Kids Speak: For Children Who Stutter

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Contest Stories

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Over the next few months, we will be sharing some of the entries from our *Fluency Fantasies Across America* contest, so get ready to read! You all did such a terrific job writing these

stories that we thought you might want to read what other people had to say as well. Our first story comes from Ashley, age 9, from Hawaii. We think you'll really like this one!

Ashley's Story

My name is Ashley and I am 9 years old. I have been going to speech for 4 years. Because I stutter, I never really participated in any difficult speaking situations. I am a very outgoing person but I avoided any activities that required me to speak for a long time in front of people. I stuck to playing sports and large group activities.

I learned by talking to my friends about my stuttering made my life much easier. I was much more comfortable and I did not stutter as much. Yes, there will always be those children who will still make fun but that is just something in life that helps me understand better the type of person I do not want to be.

Last year my two best friends were going out for cheerleading and they asked me to join them. I was very nervous because of my stuttering. I was not sure I wanted to but I decided would try. There was a lot to memorize and I had to speak very fast and very loud. The most difficult part for me was when I had to do a cheer solo. Sometimes I stuttered and sometimes I did not. The first couple of times it happened I was very mad, but after awhile I learned it was okay and most of the time people did not even notice. When the season was over, I was very proud of myself for being able to stand up and speak in front of others, even if I did stutter.

In the future, I think my stuttering will get better. I am not sure if it will ever be gone forever, but I think I will be able to control it a little more. In speech, I have now learned that it is okay to stutter and I have learned how to be aware of when I am stuttering. I know when I am nervous or excited chances are I might stutter more than normal. Speech has also helped me learn how to talk about my stuttering. Admitting that I have a problem is a big deal for me and now that I am aware of my problem, I will be able to better learn how to deal with it.

During the cheerleading season, I ran into another problem, kids asking me about my stuttering. Some of the girls thought I was just fooling around. I did not know what to say and usually my dad jumped in and said something like nothing is wrong with her she stutters but she is fine. I did not like to admit I had a problem and besides that, I was not sure how to answer their questions. I talked to my parents and my speech teacher on what to do and what to say. My parents got me a great book called "Sometimes I Just Stutter." My speech teacher told me they were just curious. It took awhile but I was finally able to talk about my stuttering. I was able to tell the girls on the squad that I was not always sure why I stuttered. Sometimes I stuttered because I was nervous, sometimes I stuttered because I was rushing to get the words out. I also told them that sometimes when I try very hard not to stutter that I stutter even more. Sometimes I would even try to change a cheer so that I could use a different word that was easier for me to say.

To help other children in the future I think teachers should be better educated on what to do if they have a child who stutters in their class. Most of my teachers did not know what to do and they tried finishing my sentences, telling me to slow down and take a deep breathe, and some even told me to think before I speak. It was very frustrating to me. If teachers better understand stuttering then they can better help the class understand stuttering. This will make life a little easier for the student who stutters.

I think in the future we should make sure children who stutter understand that yes it is a problem but with proper training speaking can be made easier. The student needs to be reassured that stuttering is okay and it should not keep her from doing anything she may want to do. Anything is possible if you put your mind to it, even for a person who stutters.

