



A joint venture of Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh and the Department of Communication Science and Disorders at the University of Pittsburgh

Stuttering Center News

February 2004
Volume 2, Issue 1

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Writing Goals in Stuttering Treatment

Craig Coleman, M.A., CCC-SLP

One of the most important skills a speech-language pathologist (SLP) can develop for treating any disorder is the ability to set goals that allow the clinician to target *all* aspects of the child's disorder. When treating children who stutter, clinicians should set objectives that target *all* aspects of the stuttering disorder—not just the number of disfluencies he or she produces.

Many clinicians are familiar with goals targeting articulation or speech sound disorders. As a result, they may write fluency goals such as: "Johnny will achieve 80% fluency in the clinical setting and the classroom setting with his peers."

Objectives such as these have at least *four* critical flaws. First, they only address the "quantity of stuttering," not the "quality" of stuttering--. In other words, they do not address the secondary behaviors, physical tension, or avoidance the child may also experience. Second, while a criterion of 80% may be acceptable for a child with an articulation deficit, 80% fluency still means that the child is disfluent 20% of the time (which indicates severe stuttering). Third, an objective such as this does not indicate if the number of disfluencies is actually being reduced. Finally, and most importantly, the child may not have control over how fluent he is; he only has control over whether he *uses techniques* to help him speak more easily. Therefore, our goals should focus on the child's *effort*, in addition to the desired clinical *outcome*.

The task of writing objectives for stuttering may seem less daunting if it is broken down into general categories reflecting the breadth of the stuttering disorder. Examples include:

Targeting "Quantity" of Stuttering:

Johnny will demonstrate the ability to reduce the number of disfluencies in his speech by using easy starts 85% of the time in a structured conversation.

Targeting "Quality" of Stuttering:

Johnny will demonstrate the ability to reduce physical tension during stuttering using the "easing out" technique, for 50% of disfluencies during oral reading.

Targeting Communication:

Johnny will decrease avoidance behaviors associated with his stuttering by entering 3 specific situations where he previously avoided stuttering.

Johnny will demonstrate desensitization to stuttering by using 5 pseudostutters during a conversation in the classroom.

Targeting Knowledge of Stuttering:

Johnny will increase his knowledge about stuttering by passing 3 quizzes on basic stuttering facts.

Johnny will educate 2 friends about his stuttering treatment techniques.

All of the above objectives should be individualized to the child's specific needs. And, of course, the specific techniques, percentages, and settings should be varied as necessary.) Writing goals in this way will help the child address the entire stuttering disorder.

SLP Corner: **Helping the Child Become the Expert**

Craig Coleman, M.A., CCC-SLP

When treating school-age children or adolescents who stutter, it is crucial to help them learn how to educate other people about stuttering. This includes the family, peers, and others in the community. In the beginning stages of therapy, it may be difficult for the student to embrace this responsibility, for they themselves may have very limited knowledge about stuttering.

One of the initial goals of therapy, then, is to help students become “experts” about their stuttering. By increasing their awareness and understanding of various aspects of stuttering, we can

help empower students to take responsibility for educating others. For the child who stutters, *knowledge is power*.

There are several ways we can work toward helping children increase their knowledge about stuttering. One way is to give students regular quizzes about stuttering that will help them distinguish facts from myths. These should be short - no more than five questions - so there will be time for discussion and time to work on other objectives.

In the December 2003 edition of our *KidSpeak* newsletter, we held a contest, or “stuttering trivia game” for children who stutter. Students provided answers to simple questions about stuttering and got to test their knowledge against other kids. This is another way you can help children to increase their knowledge about stuttering.

Since children also typically enjoy playing the role of teachers, another activity is to have a child administer a “stuttering quiz” to his family, teachers and friends. Let the child score the quiz to determine the winner. This will also help the child learn how to provide information about stuttering to various audiences since they will often have to supply the correct answers and explain *why* the answers are correct.

Children can also be encouraged to give a presentation about stuttering to their clinician, family members, or others. In this presentation, children can explain what stuttering is, how it’s treated, etc. They can also describe more specific aspects of their own stuttering, like what speaking strategies they use, how it feels to stutter, etc. This gives children the chance to explore their own feelings in addition to educating others.

Following the presentation, children can administer a quiz to the participants. Many times, children will want to do these presentations in front of their classmates so they can teach their peers about stuttering. Remember that every child will move at his own pace. While some children may want to give a class presentation, others may not be ready -- they should not be pushed. It is best for the child to determine his level of readiness for these activities.

By helping children become the expert about their speech, we can help them learn about stuttering. This will serve as a tool they can use for the rest of their lives. In this respect, increasing knowledge about stuttering is just as important as any other objective that may be targeted during therapy. Such objectives should be an integral part of the child’s treatment plan.

Send your own treatment ideas to Craig Coleman at craig.coleman@chp.edu!

Message From the Stuttering Center

Craig Coleman

J. Scott Yaruss



The Stuttering Center News has a new look! We have changed the format of the newsletter with this edition. We hope the new format will allow us to provide articles that are more in-depth rather than smaller articles that only touch the surface of issues. We look forward to your feedback about this new format.

Please let us know if you have any comments or suggestions. You can also submit articles or an ideas for future articles. We now have over 170 people who receive the *Stuttering Center News* and we look forward to more joining us soon!

Research Update: Children's Perceptions of People who Stutter

Craig Coleman, M.A., CCC-SLP

A study by April Franck, Roberta Jackson, Jane Pimentel, and Gary Greenwood appeared in the Spring 2003 edition of the *Journal of Fluency Disorders*. This study, entitled "School-age children's perceptions of a person who stutters," found that negative perceptions of people who stutter may be established by the fourth or fifth grade.

In this investigation, children were asked to rate personality and intelligence characteristics of adults who stutter and adults who do not stutter. To a significant degree, children in this study associated negative attributes with the adults who stutter.

As the authors in this study discuss, the fact that children establish these perceptions at such a young age highlights the need for broad-based education in the community about stuttering.

In this newsletter, we often discuss the importance of community involvement in treating people who stutter. We invite classroom teachers to work with the speech-language pathologists (SLP) in your school. You may want SLPs to give a talk to the children in your class about stuttering – and other communication disorders. This can help to reduce negative stereotyping and teasing or bullying for all of your students.

At the Stuttering Center, we are committed to educating children about stuttering. If there is anything we can do to facilitate this process, please let us know. This may involve simply sending handouts or talking with teachers and SLPs. As the study above highlights, it is never too early to begin educating children about stuttering.

The study above also highlights the importance of helping children give classroom presentations on stuttering. In addition to empowering the child, the presentation will also help educate the child's classmates about stuttering.

Since children may already have negative perceptions about stuttering by the time they are in fourth or fifth grade, this study also shows the need for *early* education with both children who stutter and children who do not stutter.

Note: You can get a free handout about helping children give classroom presentations from the National Stuttering Association (NSA) support group. On their website (www.WeStutter.org).

Spotlight: Jack Paar

Craig Coleman, M.A., CCC-SLP

On January 27, 2004, Jack Paar died at the age of 85. Paar is probably best remembered for his stint as host of the *Tonight Show*. Paar overcame stuttering and tuberculosis as a child and became one of the most successful radio and television personalities of his time.

In addition to his work in radio and television, Paar also appeared in several movies, including *Love Nest* in 1951, where he co-starred with Marilyn Monroe, another person who stuttered and went on to achieve success in the entertainment industry.

Coming Up: The 21st Annual Conference of the National Stuttering Association (NSA)

Plans have just been announced for the NSA's 21st Annual Conference, to be held from **June 24 to 27** in Baltimore, MD.

The conference is a great opportunity for your clients *and their families* to connect with other people who have had similar experiences. Full info can be found on the NSA website at www.WeStutter.org.

Upcoming Events

Stuttering Center staff will present several workshops in the coming months. For more information, check out our website at www.StutteringCenter.org or send an email to Craig Coleman at craig.coleman@chp.edu.

February 18 - SWPSHA's "ASHA Revisited," Pittsburgh, PA

Craig Coleman - *Stuttering newsletter: A model for increasing community involvement*

February 21 - Chicago, IL Illinois State Convention

J. Scott Yaruss - *Practical counseling skills for SLPs*.

March 12 - NYC, NY

J. Scott Yaruss - *Practical treatment strategies for children who stutter*

March 25 - Amherst, NY

J. Scott Yaruss - *Children who stutter: strategies for clinical practice*

March 26 - Albany, NY

J. Scott Yaruss - *Children who stutter: strategies for clinical practice*

March 26 - Clarion, PA

Craig Coleman: *Stuttering Presentation for Clarion NSSLHA Chapter*

April 1 - State College, PA PSHA Annual Convention

Craig Coleman:

Fluency Office Hours 2004: Q&A (with Glen Tellis of Indiana University of PA and Joe Donaher of Children's Hospital of Philadelphia);

A Resource Guide for Parents of Children who Stutter (with Jennifer Carlson)

April 1 - Seattle, WA

J. Scott Yaruss - *Children who stutter: strategies for clinical practice*

April 2, 2004 - Portland, OR

J. Scott Yaruss - *Children who stutter: strategies for clinical practice*

Clinician Profile:

Charlotte Johnson,
MCST, Ph.D. CCC-SLP

Craig Coleman, M.A., CCC-SLP

Dr. Johnson has worked at CHP as a clinician in the Dept. of Communication Disorders since 1968, and she has provided clinical training experiences to graduate students since 1969. Her undergraduate training was in the UK, and she completed both graduate degrees at the University of Pittsburgh. Her interests have always been in the area of pediatric communication disorders and she has worked with a wide age range, essentially between 18 months and 18 years. She is child- and family-centered in her approach, believing that a real partnership between all three parts of the triangle (child, parent, therapist) is critical to progress.



I asked Dr. Johnson several questions about her work at Children's:

Q: Who had the biggest influence on your career?

A: My clinical teachers, in a variety of professional disciplines, from my undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate years. In the UK, all lecturers held clinical posts as well as teaching ones; here I learned from those who actually worked with patients as well as doing research and teaching. Among such, I include many of my colleagues both here at CHP and in the broader community.

Q: What positive changes have you seen in the field of stuttering during the last 20 years?

A: I think we have gone backwards and forwards. The recurring emphasis for many is still the reduction of stuttering behaviors to total fluency. Behavioral approaches were all the rage when I was in graduate school. More mechanical gizmos have also floated to the top from time to time. Fluency, as nonstuttering individuals (and some who stutter) define it, may not be a realistic outcome for some. The re-emergence of treatments addressing the whole person in the context of family and community needs to be encouraged and supported.

Q: What are the biggest challenges that we still face in stuttering?

A: Helping families and individuals understand how complex communication and its disorders—including stuttering—really are. Helping families and individuals work out what situations and strategies are facilitative of easier communication and what factors trigger problems. I tend to talk to families using the analogy of chronic problems like asthmas or seizures; we cannot always change the underlying precursors for disorders but we can learn about management.

Q: What is one thing that every clinician who sees children who stutter should know?

A: You are not treating a disorder; you are treating a child who does not live in a vacuum. Communication occurs in the interpersonal space of family and community. Difficulties with communication must be addressed in this context. Even within this framework, you cannot just address a child's speech behaviors; you must work with the whole child: thoughts, feelings, beliefs, behaviors on many levels, judgment of self and others. This is what used to be called the gestalt or wholeness of the child in him/herself and community.

Q: How will the field of stuttering change in the next 10 years?

A: I believe we will learn much more about the central nervous system roots of the disorder and, in particular, the role of synaptic pattern reiteration over time in the persistence of symptoms in

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The Stuttering Center offers evaluation and treatment for children who stutter through Children's Hospital of Pittsburgh in Oakland and at our satellite offices in Bethel Park, Monroeville, and Wexford. Visit the Children's Hospital website at www.chp.edu for directions.

Find us on the Web!

www.stutteringcenter.org

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Send us your questions
and comments!!

some individuals. This should lead to more commitment to early and family based intervention to prevent, as much as possible, the establishment and maintenance of aberrant synaptic relays.

Dr. Johnson has played a crucial role in helping to make the Stuttering Center of Western PA a success. Those of us who have had the privilege of working with Dr. Johnson are grateful for all of her contributions to our field!

