

SUMMER 2018

## FLUENCY

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An estimated 1% of the population stutters. Even though that means stuttering could directly affect over 70 million people worldwide, there are still many misconceptions...not only about what stuttering is, but also about what it can be like to deal with it daily...what it might sometimes feel like to be a person who stutters.

Fernando is a 16-year-old who is considerate, funny and passionate about soccer. He also is a person who stutters that, fortunately for us, is willing to share some insight. He is helping me write this article to assist others in better understanding stuttering.

SLPs may define stuttering by disruptions in the forward flow of speech due to prolongations (eeeexample), repetitions (e-e-e-example) and/or blocks (no sound/pause before speaking). Other movements (e.g., eye blinking) may happen during tension too. However, these pieces of the stuttering puzzle relate to the listeners' experience - a lot more is often going on for the speaker who is stuttering.

Stuttering may lead one to feel out of control. Fernando explains, "It can just feel like someone is controlling me, the way I talk, the way I say things, and it doesn't really feel good. It could be my whole body that gets tight or my throat or my whole mouth. It's just different sometimes. When I get frustrated, I try to push out the word, but it doesn't come out. So I just feel tension all over my body, and it just makes it worse...the word just doesn't come out."



It is hard to imagine what it is like if you are fluent, meaning you do not stutter. Fluent speakers often want to empathize, which may lead to the assumption that stuttering is like stumbling over words in a nerve-wracking presentation. Fernando clarifies that for some people who stutter, it really is quite different: "You sometimes get frustrated when the words don't want to come out." People may try to help by saying to relax, but "we don't stutter because we're nervous and [telling someone to calm down] makes it worse." It is crucial to understand that most people who stutter know exactly which words they will stutter on before the actual moment.

While there is no cure, there are ways to reduce negative effects. "Before therapy, I wasn't able to control my stuttering as much, but today I can because I've gotten help," relates Fernando. Each person may have a different experience, but for him, using "stretches, voluntary stutters and pull outs has helped a lot" when he wants to speak more fluently. Also, confronting stuttering openly may help with quality of life. "I react differently now. Before, I used to care a lot about what people think, but now I don't as much."

So, what's the takeaway message on this complex topic? "It's not easy to be fluent all the time. When someone is stuttering, don't be rude because you could hurt their feelings," explains Fernando. We can help by showing that we care about what people say, rather than just how they say it.

## FUN SUMMER DAYS AT SPG

Learn to play, play to learn! We are having a blast in Walnut Creek during Fun Summer Days. SPG clinic families are exploring the outdoors with their therapist. These activities allow families to experience play and language as SPG continues to promote interactions in a child's natural environment. Families are learning that everyday experiences such as playing in the sand, using sidewalk chalk, painting, popping bubbles and playing basketball can easily create positive speech/language and social interactions. These outdoor activities are fun for the entire family as siblings, parents and peers all enjoy their outdoor play time together.



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Summer days are the entire week of June 18th, July 16 and August 6th in our Walnut Creek courtyard!

Happy Summer!

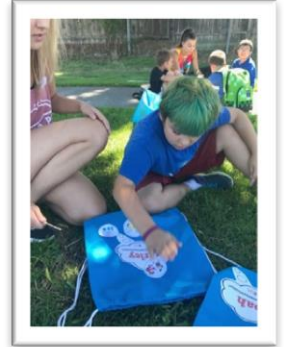
Thank you Smile Power Orthodontics for the delicious treats! Wishing everyone a happy and safe holiday!



## CAMP SUPER COMMUNICATORS

SPG's Camp Super Communicators at Valle Verde Children's Center in Walnut Creek is July 9th-12!

We can't wait to see our social super heroes sore with new skills and earn their social badges!



"Don't wait, bring them in by age 8." Dr. Powers in Walnut Creek does free 1st visit consultations.



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