

The Girl Who Stutters

Mia J.

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Authors' Purpose

I want this book to help other kids who stutter. I hope they feel happy after they read the book and less alone.

-Mia J.

We hope this book benefits students, families, and clinicians. Mia's story, as well as the attached handouts, are meant to provide an informative, entertaining, and therapeutic experience. Feel free to "stop" when you see a stop sign and flip to the corresponding handout in the back of the book, or read straight through. We hope you enjoy *The Girl Who Stutters*.

-Rebecca D. & Casey W.



There once was a girl named Mia. She LOVED to dance. She danced all different kinds of dances: hip hop, jazz, contemporary, ballet, tap, and lyrical. It made her think, “Is every other 5th grader THIS busy?”



When she danced she felt free, like a butterfly, or a gazelle running through the hills of Africa. Even better, when she danced, she got to see her friends.

They always had a lot to talk about, like their favorite show or their hair. Mia liked having friends everywhere! Getting to dance and seeing everyone always made her really excited. It made her think, “Let’s dance!”



Mia talked even more than she danced, and when she was really excited she talked REALLY fast. Talking in super speed made her words all tangled up in her mouth.



Her speech was bumpy and hard to get out. Her friends could say whatever they wanted as fast as they wanted, but Mia couldn't. It made her think, "It's like I have a twisted tongue."



Mia always got excited to celebrate Halloween. This year, she was dressed as a lady bug and ready for her usual night of trick-or-treating. Little did she know, this Halloween would be different.

While walking with her sister Mia said, “D-d-d-d-do you want to go to that house?”

“Mia!” Her sister said surprised. “Did you just stutter?”

“S-s-s-sorry! I can’t help-p-p it!” She said.



Mia’s sister seemed to forget about her bumpy speech, but Mia didn’t. It made her think, “What just happened?” and “What is stuttering?”





As Mia got a little bit older, her tangled speech kept showing itself. **She had a stutter.** It made her think,
“Will this go away on its own?”





It didn't. It got worse. She didn't know what to do. She felt lost and alone. One day her mom had a talk with her.

“Mia, do you ever feel like you have a hard time getting out what you want to say?”

Mia took a deep breath and said, “I have a stutter. I-I-I-I-I have a stutter. I feel like everybody else is the same, but I am different.”



“Oh sweetie! It’s okay, everybody’s different.”

Her mom gave Mia a hug.

“But mom,” said Mia, “What am I going to do?

What am I going to d-d-do?”

“Sweetie, we'll meet with a speech pathologist. He will know exactly what to do.”

It made Mia think, “Will this help me at all?”



Mia was nervous to meet the speech pathologist. She stood outside the big white building and looked up the long, steep staircase.





She knew it was time to talk with a stranger about stuttering. She was anxious. She got butterflies in her stomach, but it made her think, “No, you have to be brave.”



Mia waited for about two minutes, but it felt like two hours. Finally, a tall, thin, man came out. He got down so he could see her eyes and stuck out his hand.

“Hi, what’s your name?” He said. His hand was huge compared to hers.

She looked up and said, “Mia, M-M-Mia.”

The man then said, “Hello, I’m Glenn, I have a stutter too. Come on back and we can chat a bit.”



It was so unlike her to feel so timid. Why was she so nervous? It made her think, “How’s this all going to go down?”

Glenn said, “I want you to, I want you to talk, and I want to notice how much you stutter.”

Mia thought to herself, “Noooo, I won’t, I won’t, I won’t!” Glenn could tell Mia was holding back, that she was guarding her true personality.

He then said, “Mia, tell me five things that you feel about stuttering.”



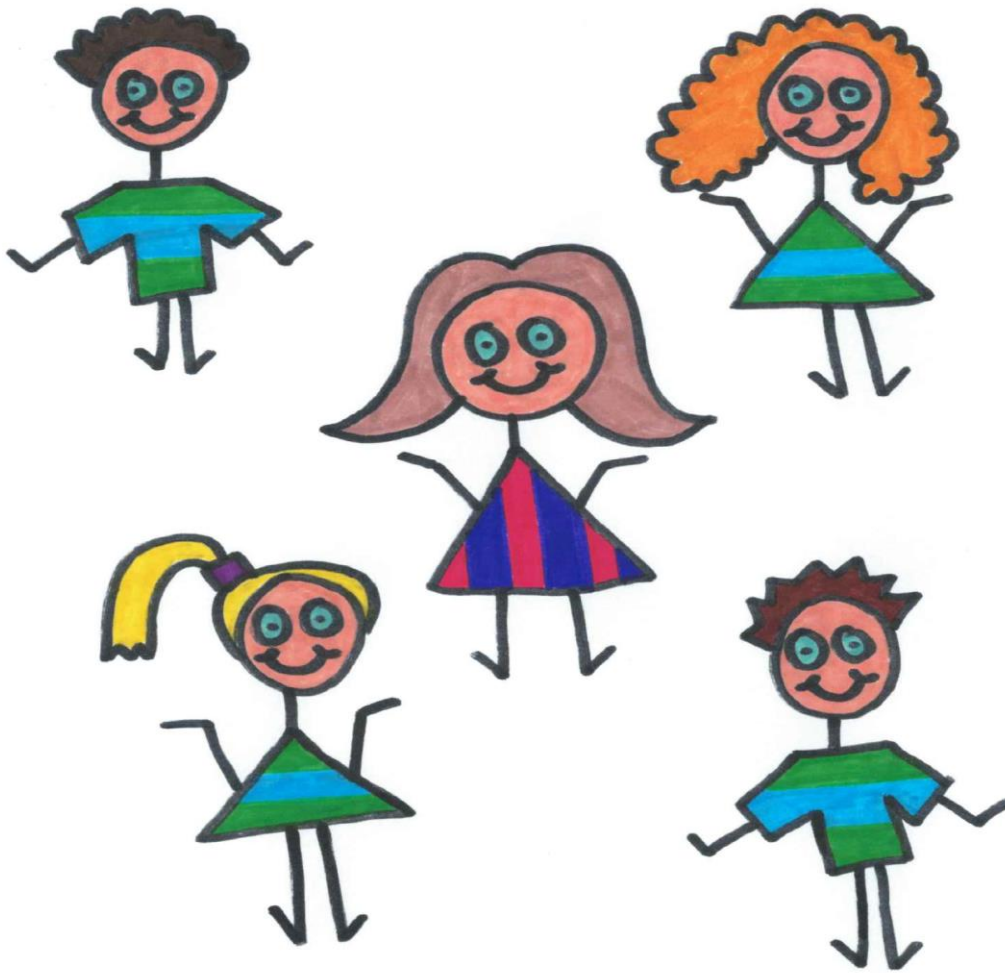
“ANNOYING, FRUSTRATING, DEPRESSING!” She quickly blurted out. “It’s also MADDENING and POOPY!”

She felt so powerful after sending stuttering to its room.

It made her think, “Going to speech isn’t so bad after all.”



Glenn smiled as the real Mia appeared.
“Stuttering is just one part of me.” She continued. “I’m
a dancer, an actress, a sister, a daughter, and a friend.
I’m a smart kid, a speaker of Spanish, and I have a
crazy sweet tooth!”



Before she knew it, Glenn said, “Time to go.” It had gone by so quickly!

It made her think, “Maybe being different isn’t that bad!”

As time goes on, Mia still spends time in the big white building visiting Glenn, but it no longer feels like a scary place. Sessions aren't always easy, but she's working on accepting the way she talks and learning speech tools to help make stuttering less annoying. She's also learning what to say when kids tease her or ask why she talks like that.

Her family, friends, and teachers have been there along the way in elementary school. Now, Glenn and Mia are working on ways to help the real Mia shine even in a scary new place like middle school full of people she doesn't know. He's told her to remember that it's not her stutter that defines her, but everything else about her.





Mia began to realize that stutter or no stutter, she was different. No one else was exactly like her! How awesome is that?! She dances, she reads, she eats, she plays, she sings, she laughs, she talks. She does all of these things differently than other people, and so do you. So... that's Mia's story! It makes her think,

“What's your story?”



What a 10-year old thinks stuttering is:
“Stuttering is where you get stuck on a word and you can’t get rid of it.” -Mia

Note to family members:

Sometimes it can be hard to talk about stuttering, but it's important to be open with each other. Discussing stuttering with one another helps to make people feel less alone and allows them to talk about it without feeling ashamed or embarrassed. Talking with family members about stuttering helps to make it more comfortable to talk with others about it too. Opening up about stuttering also creates opportunities to seek advice and resources that are available to people who stutter and their families. Some of these resources include: working with a Speech Language Pathologist, meeting others at a stuttering support group, and accessing information from online resources about stuttering (www.stutteringhelp.org, www.westutter.org).

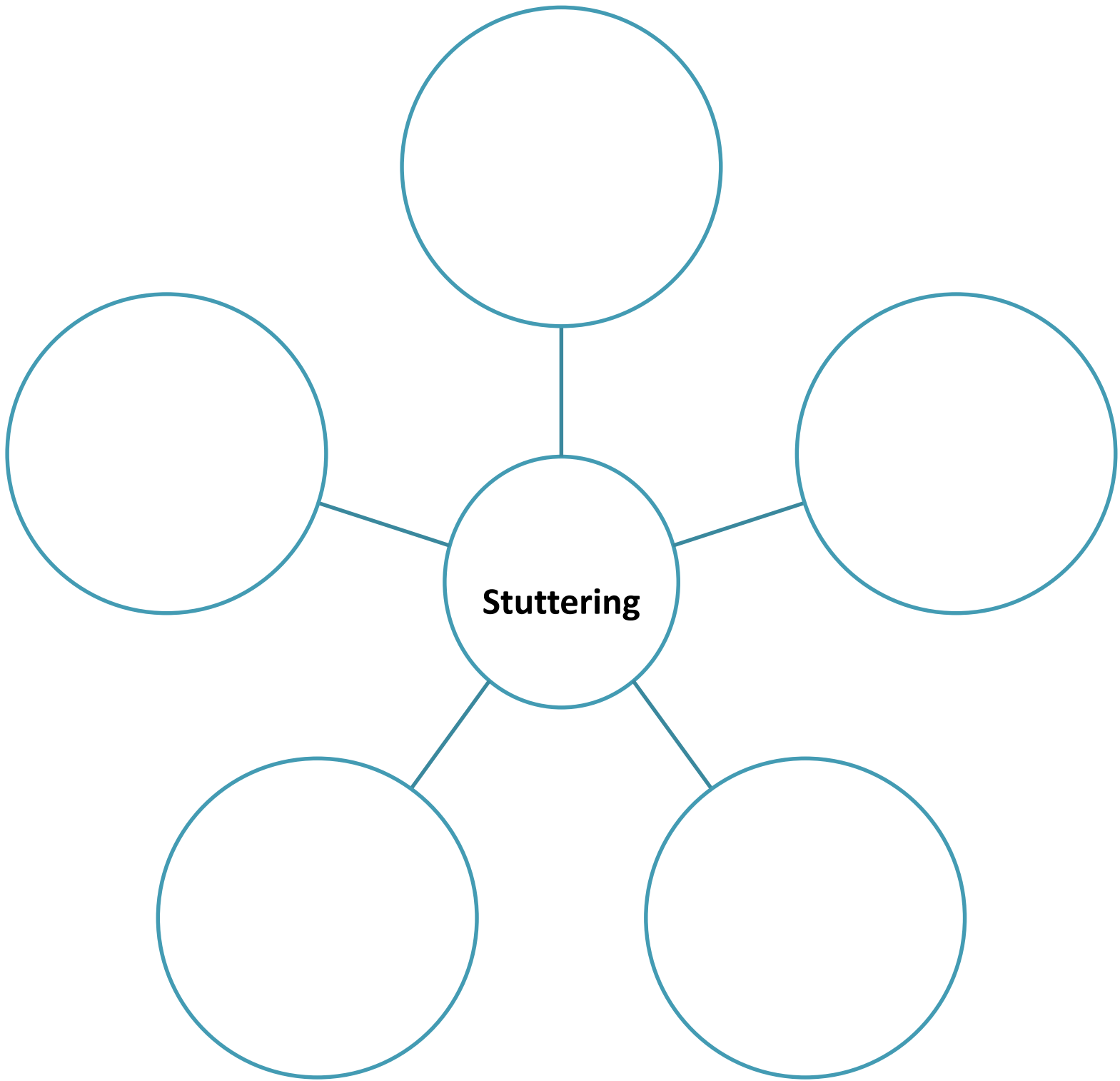
What can family members say or do to talk about stuttering?

- ◆ Approach the person who stutters in a kind and gentle way.
Example: *"I've noticed sometimes it's hard for you to get your words out. I want to know how this makes you feel and let you know that you can talk to me about it whenever you want."*
- ◆ Find materials that provide opportunities that the person who stutters can relate to.
Example: *Read a book about a child who encounters a problem and ask the child what challenges they feel that they face.*
- ◆ Look into stuttering support groups nearby for a safe place to talk about stuttering with others.

Suggestions for Speech Language Pathologists:

- ◆ Ask a direct, yet open-ended question to get the conversation on the topic of stuttering started.
Example: *"Do you know why you are in speech therapy?"*
- ◆ Ask the child about their knowledge of stuttering and have them come up with their own definition.
Activity: *Use blank chart on the next page to have the child come up with five things that stuttering means to him/her.*
- ◆ Work on aspects of speech that matter most to the child.
Example: *Ask them what they want to get out of speech therapy. Do they want to feel in control? Do they want to feel more fluent all of the time? Do they want to work on using speech tools during certain situations? The goal is for speech therapy to be a positive experience for people who stutter, and this should be the focus of the sessions.*

Use this handout to come up with 5 things that stuttering means to you.



What is a Speech Language Pathologist?

Someone who teaches people who have trouble talking.

They give people tools to help them communicate.

Where do they work?

- schools
- hospitals
- private clinics

They work with kids and adults!

If they work with kids they:

- play with toys & games
- read books & look at pictures
- ask questions

Why see a Speech & Language Pathologist?

- they care about others
- they want to help people
- people can talk to them about their feelings

They are also called Speech Therapists or SLPs.

What happens in Speech Therapy?

The Speech Language pathologist will probably ask some questions and want to learn more about the people coming into speech and how they are doing. They may also want to know how people feel or what they want to work on.

The Speech Language Pathologist will work on special speech and language goals by reading books, looking at pictures, playing with toys and games, or just talking.

The Speech Language Pathologist may take notes during the session, or even use a video camera. This is because it helps them keep track of the way people talk and if they are improving because of the speech therapy. Their main goal is to help people and make sure the therapy is the right type of teaching for each person.

Speech Tools for Stuttering

Easy Voice

- Gently say the words and drag out the sounds. It should sound like it goes all together, kind of like cursive writing, only with speech.
- "Leeeets-praaaactiice-theee-eeeeasy-voooooiice."

Voluntary Stuttering

- Choose to stutter on purpose without a lot of effort.
- "Lets pra pra practice voluntary stu stu stuttering."

Light Contacts

- Light contacts make speaking easier and less effortful. Think about the tongue touching softly against the places in your mouth or the lips touching softly together. Practice feeling what hard speech is like vs. light speech.
- "Let's practice light speech contacts."

Pull-Out

- Slowly ease out of a moment of stuttering. Use a tool like cursive speech or light touches in order to help ease out of the stutter.
- "Let's pppr (pause then ease the word out gently) practice pullout."

Cancellation

- Allow a stutter to happen in the moment, then go back to re-say the stuttered word more smoothly.
- Let's pra-pra-practice practice cancellation."

Dealing with Teasing

Sometimes people pick on others because they don't understand the things that make them different. Getting made fun of is really hard and it can be difficult to know what to say. Here are some pointers to use when being picked on.

Explain: It could help to explain why you talk differently and that you can't help it. You may be the first person they have ever met who stutters. By telling them about your stutter, you could help prevent other people from getting teased by this person in the future.

Be honest: Let the person know that it hurts your feelings when they make fun of the way you talk. Telling them about the way they make you feel can help them understand that stuttering isn't something to laugh at.

Prepare: You can work with your Speech Language Pathologist to come up with some ideas about what to say when kids tease you or ask you why you talk the way you do.

Share: Don't be afraid to talk to a friend, parent, teacher, or Speech Language Pathologist about any problems you may be having with other kids. Talking to others about this can help you feel better.

Know: Understand that no matter how painful it is to be teased, it's okay to be who you are. Everyone has certain things that make them different.

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