Founded in 1977, the NSA is the largest self-help/support organization for people who stutter in the United States. Throughout our history, we have worked to improve the lives of people who stutter and their families, whether that is changing the life of one individual or raising awareness of stuttering throughout the nation and the world. For example, the NSA was instrumental in securing a Presidential Proclamation establishing the second week of May each year as National Stuttering Awareness Week.


In 2005, we launched our NSAKids initiative to help children who stutter and their families through local chapters, dedicated publications, and a new level of personal support.

Our history shows our commitment to people affected by stuttering and proves the success of our mission.
When you are talking with someone who is having trouble producing sounds or words smoothly, he or she may be stuttering. Stuttering can cause listeners to feel uncertain or anxious about how to respond. You will probably react appropriately by instinct, but if you are not sure what to do, you are not alone. The NSA is here to help. If you keep the following suggestions in mind, talking with a person who stutters can become more comfortable for you—and for the person who stutters.

**PEOPLE WHO STUTTER ARE NORMAL**
They just have difficulty producing sounds and words fluently. About 1% of adults and 5% of children stutter. That translates to approximately 3 million people in the United States. Stuttering typically starts in childhood. Most people start stuttering between the ages of 2½ and 5 years. Boys are approximately three times more likely to stutter than girls.

**STUTTERING IS NOT A PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDER**
While a speaker appears nervous, keep in mind that the nervousness is a result of embarrassment about their stuttering, rather than a cause of it.

**THE CAUSES OF STUTTERING ARE COMPLEX**
Current research suggests that many different factors may be involved but the precise cause(s) of stuttering are still unknown. Most researchers now consider stuttering to be a neurological condition, and one which is shown to have a genetic component.

**PEOPLE STUTTER IN DIFFERENT WAYS**
Some repeat syllables (e.g.: C-c-c-cat) and others stretch out sounds (e.g.: Mmm milk) or “block” (absence of sound) while speaking. There are as many different ways to stutter as there are people who stutter.

**STUTTERING VARIES**
Some days, it is harder to speak smoothly, and other days it is easier. It is not always possible to figure out why a person stutters more at one time than at another.

**IT’S OKAY TO STUTTER**
Don’t give advice such as: “slow down,” “take a breath,” or “relax.” Maintain eye contact, listen carefully, and wait patiently until the person is finished speaking.

**STUTTERING IS NOT EASY TO CHANGE**
Stuttering may look like an easy problem that can be solved with simple advice. At this time there is no consistent, research-based cure for stuttering, so for most adults who stutter, stuttering poses a life-long challenge. Still, speech therapy and self-help/support groups such as the NSA have helped countless people who stutter improve their ability to communicate.

**THERE ARE NO LIMITS TO WHAT PEOPLE WHO STUTTER CAN DO**
Many people have learned to manage their stuttering so it has little or no impact on their daily lives.

**BE PATIENT**
Most people who stutter strongly prefer to speak for themselves. You may be tempted to finish a person’s sentences or “fill in” words, but this does not help.

**BE A GOOD LISTENER**
Let the speaker know, by what you say and do, that you are listening. Focus on the message, instead of how it is said.

**IF YOU’RE NOT SURE HOW TO RESPOND, ASK THE SPEAKER**
Although some people may be uncomfortable talking about stuttering, most will appreciate your interest. Talking openly and honestly about the problem can help both of you communicate more easily.