



Speech and Language

Fluency and communication

Parent/Carer Guide




Supporting Your Child with Fluency and Communication Difficulties

Some children experience challenges with fluency (how smoothly they speak) and communication (how they share and understand ideas). These can look different for every child, from small hesitations to more noticeable differences, and they can affect confidence, friendships, and learning.

What You Might Notice

- Repeating sounds, syllables or words.
- Prolonging sounds.
- Long pauses before starting to speak.
- Different body movements, such as tapping a foot or nodding their head as they try to get their words out.
- Giving short answers even when they know more.
- Physical signs of effort when speaking, like tension in the face or shoulders.
- Speaking freely with close family or trusted friends, but then struggling to join in during other situations.
- Speaking less in groups, or letting others talk for them.

How It Might Make a Child Feel

- Frustrated or embarrassed when speech feels difficult.
 - Nervous about speaking in front of others.
 - Avoiding joining in conversations, reading aloud, or putting their hand up.
 - Feeling left out in group play or activities.
 - Less confident when trying new things that involve speaking.
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Understanding Fluency

Learning to communicate naturally involves trial and error while children are learning. Repeating sounds, pausing, stretching words or feeling anxious about speaking now and then is common. When these moments happen more often and form a regular pattern, it's a good idea to speak with your child's class teacher or SENCO to get support and advice. They may suggest making a referral to the Speech and Language Therapy service in your area for assessment and guidance.

A stammer is when a child repeats sounds or words, stretches out sounds, or pauses mid-speech. This isn't because of low intelligence or lack of language skills; most children with stammers know exactly what they want to say, but the muscles used for speech don't always coordinate smoothly with the signals from the brain.

Children with selective mutism may talk comfortably in familiar settings, like at home, but remain silent in other situations, such as at school or around people they don't know well. This isn't a deliberate choice; it usually happens because the child feels anxious, shy, or under pressure to speak.

Stammering can:

- Come and go, and be more noticeable when your child is tired, excited, or under pressure.
- Be stronger in fast conversations or when speaking in front of a group.
- Create tension in the face, jaw, or shoulders as they work to get the words out.

Selective Mutism can:

- Be stronger when your child feels nervous, shy or pressured to speak.
- Happen in certain situations or with particular people, even if your child speaks freely elsewhere.
- Make social activities or group activities feel stressful, which can affect confidence and participation.

The Science of Speaking

Fluent speech relies on three key things working together:

- Brain processing: planning what to say and sending signals to the muscles.
- Motor coordination: smooth movement of the tongue, lips, and jaw.
- Breathing control: steady airflow to power the voice.

If any of these are disrupted, speech can be harder. Stress or worry can make this worse. When the brain triggers the “Fight, Flight, or Freeze” response, the body tenses and breathing becomes shallow, making talking even trickier.

How Happy Breathing Can Help

Happy Breathing is a simple breathing exercise that helps children:

- Regulate their breathing so they have steady airflow for talking.
- Relax muscles in the face, jaw, and shoulders.
- Feel calmer and more confident before they speak.
- Helps manage feelings of anxiety in social situations.

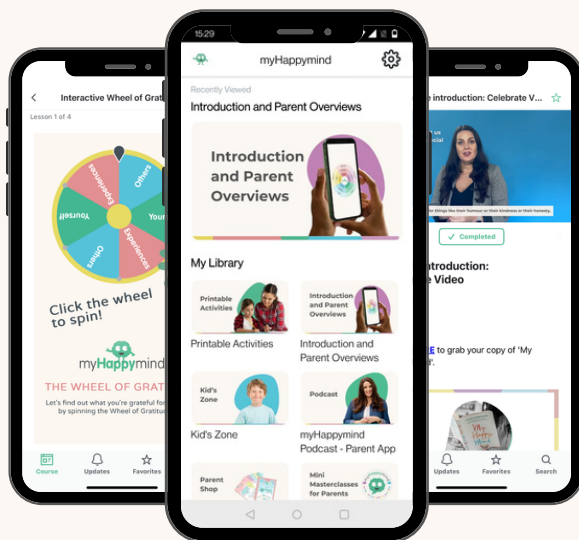
While Happy Breathing isn't a cure for children with speech, language and communication needs, making it a daily habit can help your child's speech feel easier, calmer, and more confident.

How You Can Support Your Child at Home

- Make speaking feel relaxed and fun, avoid rushing them or finishing their sentences.
- Give plenty of time for them to share their ideas.
- Model calm, slow speech yourself.
- Celebrate their ideas, not just their fluency.
- Encourage short, regular speaking activities that feel playful.

The myHappyMind programme includes interactive activities you can do together at home including:

- Happy Breathing files.
- Songs to build rhythm, rhyme, and new vocabulary.
- Turn-taking games to practise conversational flow.
- Conversation cards to help you start meaningful chats with your child.



If you haven't already, download the parent app to access the resources by scanning the QR code below...



YOU WILL NEED THIS AUTHENTICATION CODE TO SIGN UP

The resources provided are designed to offer extra support for children with fluency or communication needs in school and at home.

They are not a replacement for input from a Speech and Language Therapist or other professionals.

If you are concerned about your child's communication skills we recommend speaking to your child's class teacher and SENCO.





If you have any questions, just get in touch with your Customer Happiness Manager, or contact us at hello@myhappymind.org or 01625 447547.

We would love to see your completed activities!

You can share these with us over on our social media channels below:



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