

Overview Guide

What is it?

Desensitization involves activities that help students reduce negative emotions about stuttering such as fear and embarrassment (Sheehan, 1970, Van Riper, 1973). It involves practicing different ways of stuttering (Dell, 2000), talking about feelings (Campbell, 2003, Chmela & Reardon, 2001), and progressing through hierarchies of difficult speaking situations (Bernstein, Ratner & Sisskin, 2002).

Why does it help?

Desensitization may help students maintain or develop healthier attitudes and feelings about talking as well as reduce fear or avoidance associated with stuttering (Murphy, 1999).

What messages does it give to students?

- Stuttering isn't your fault and there are lots of ways to help it.
- Stuttering doesn't make you a bad kid, and it's okay not to like stuttering.
- It's okay to stutter, but it helps to learn to stutter in easier ways.
- The most important thing is to always share brilliant ideas, even if you stutter.
- It's okay to have all kinds of feelings about stuttering.

What materials do you use?

1. *Silly Stutters Cards* and Red Beanbag (Tool Kit)
2. *Weekly Check-In Speech Wheel* (Book & Tool Kit)
3. *"My Thoughts" Strips* (Tool Kit)
4. *"What is True" Envelope with Discussion and Journal Strips* (Tool Kit)
5. *Special Stuttering Stories* (Book)



Matthew's Order

Matthew went out to lunch with his best friend Ben and Ben's mom. Ben always ordered his own food, so when it was Matthew's turn, Matthew decided to order too. He wanted a cheeseburger, but when he went to say the "ch" in cheeseburger, he felt himself getting super stuck. His face felt hot and he knew it was taking a long time, so he ordered a hamburger instead.



Questions to think about:

- Did Matthew do the right thing by ordering for himself? Why or why not?
- Do you think Matthew had a lot of courage?
- How do you think he felt when he was stuck on the word "cheeseburger"? Why?
- Why did Matthew order a "hamburger" instead?
- Do you think it was a good idea that Matthew ordered a hamburger instead of a cheeseburger? Why or Why not?
- What would you have done?
- What could Matthew do next time?

Reed's Dilemma

Reed was on the playground at recess with four other friends in his class. They decided to play soccer. Reed was trying to tell his friends that the teams were uneven, but he couldn't start his sentence. So, he tapped his friend next to him and his friend realized he had an idea. Even though the other boys started playing, his friend waited for Reed to finish talking. Then, both boys ran off to play soccer.



Questions to think about:

- How do you think Reed felt when he was trying to get out his thoughts?
- What did he do in order to let his friend know he had something to say?
- Do you think that was a smart idea? Why or why not?
- How did his friend react?
- Why do you think his friend reacted that way?
- What would you have done if you were Reed in this situation?
- Has anything like that ever happened to you?

Kate and the Reading Bucket

Kate's teacher told the class she was starting a reading bucket. She wrote each student's name on a popsicle stick and dropped it into the bucket. Every day Kate's teacher would pull sticks out of the bucket to choose students to read aloud. Kate was afraid to read aloud because she knew she would have trouble getting her words out. Kate got butterflies in her stomach each morning and did not want to go to school. One day, Kate ran back to the classroom during lunch to get an item she forgot. She decided to take the stick with her name on it out of the bucket and throw it into the trash.



Questions to think about:

- Why was Kate feeling butterflies in her stomach and not wanting to go to school?
- What did Kate do to solve her problem?
- Do you agree with her solution? Why or why not?
- What would you have told Kate to do?
- Have you ever been afraid to read aloud in front of your class?
- Who could you talk to if you felt afraid like Kate?
- Do you think it's okay to be afraid about something?

Sam at Lunch

Sam was at lunch when a boy came up to him and told him that he talked funny. Sam looked him straight in the eyes and said, "There isn't much funny about stuttering." The boy looked at Sam and walked away.



Questions to think about:

- Why did the boy tell Sam that he talked funny?
- How do you think it made Sam feel?
- What did Sam do after the boy told him he talked funny? Was that a good idea? Why or why not?
- Has anyone ever made a comment about your talking? How did you handle it?
- What are some other things that Sam could have said or done?
- What would you do if your friend was teased about something in front of you?