

WoH 524

Stuttering_What's in your Heart

Tammy: Do you know someone who sometimes stutters when they talk? They might say: “Ca...ca...ca...ca...ca...can I have a drink?”

Or perhaps you sometimes find it hard to get a word out – like this? “Mmmmmmmmy name is Tammy.”

Stay with us to find out more about stuttering – what causes it...and how we can help someone who stutters.

Tammy: Hi and welcome to Women of Hope, I'm Tammy. And today we want to share with you some information we've learned about stuttering from our speech therapist, Cristy. She works with people who stutter so she knows a lot about it. Maybe we can get started by describing to you what stuttering is.

Carol: Hi I'm Carol, and that's a great place to start, Tammy. Stuttering is sometimes called 'bumpy speech'. A person with a stutter knows what they want to say, but at times, they have difficulty controlling the way the words come out...just like you heard at the beginning.

Tammy: Or a person who's stuttering may look like they're struggling to say something.

All of us have less fluent, or *bumpy speech* sometimes. For someone with a stutter, this happens more often - repeating sounds or parts of words, making a sound in a word much longer, or maybe it's difficult to get the sound out at all.

Carol: I was with a friend of mine and her 3 yr old boy asked her, “When, when, when, when, when are we going to the park?” I thought he was just being funny at first. But after talking with our speech therapist friend, Cristy – I now know that stuttering often starts between 2 and 5 yrs of age. And that some children go through a short time of having more *bumpy speech* than usual and this will go away after a while. It may start when a child is learning a lot of new words and trying to use longer, more complex sentences.

I think that's what happened with my friend's son, because after about 6 months, he stopped stuttering.

Tammy: But If this "bumpy" speech lasts longer than 6 months it may keep going as he grows up.

Carol: This might be a good place for us to mention what causes stuttering...

Tammy: Good idea . Cristy said they don't fully understand the causes of stuttering. But there are some things they *do* know like

- that the messages sent from the brain to the muscles that we use to speak get mixed up.
- or that a person with a family history of stuttering is more likely to develop a stutter.
- that stuttering is NOT caused by punishment or a curse.
- that a person who stutters is just as intelligent as a person who does not stutter. This is very important to remember.

Carol: And we know that stuttering is NOT caused by a person being anxious or nervous. But a person with a stutter can sometimes *become* anxious or try to avoid talking because of the way they're treated by the people around them. .

Carol: It's good to be together again on Women of Hope. Today Tammy and I are sharing some information from our speech therapist, Cristy, about stuttering.

Tammy: I was struck by what you said about the stutter not *being caused* by a person being anxious or nervous...but that they can become anxious if they're treated badly by others.

Carol: That's right – Sadly, sometimes people will tease a person who stutters, or laugh at them – that's not nice is it? And it makes it much harder for them to get the words out.

Tammy: We need to show patience and let them talk, even if it takes a while for them to get the words out.

Carol: You know, some people look away when a person stutters. It's best to look at the person and listen as you normally would. Give them time to finish what they're saying.

Tammy: And Do *not* talk *for* them or *finish their sentences* for them. Be patient. Saying things like, "slow down", may make it worse for them.

If it's your friend or a family member, ask them what helps them...and what doesn't help...so you can understand how to communicate together better.

Carol: I noticed that when my friend's little boy was stuttering, she made sure she spoke slowly to him.

Tammy: That was wise... for a child, keep your sentences short and simple...and give them time to answer. Families can be very busy with a lot of talking. So try to have some time each day talking alone with your child (other older family members can do the same). This means they can have some time when they're not trying to talk over others.

Carol: If your child is having a day with lots of stuttering, try asking them questions that only need a simple answer. Instead of saying, "Tell me all about your day at school", you could ask, "What was the best thing that happened at school today?"

Tammy: I like that idea. And watch and find out what seems to make your child feel more anxious or nervous. If they don't want to talk in front of the class, then don't put pressure on them to do so. Talk to their teacher about it. She might have some suggestions for you, and you might tell her what you think helps your child communicate well.

Carol: It's important to help your child in every way you can.

Tammy: Yes, Cristy said that it's good to praise your child when their speech is smooth – when they speak fluently. You could say something like: "That was really good. You said that beautifully." It helps them to be confident.

Carol: Praise them when they try to do something that they might be nervous about. All children need lots of praise and encouragement.

Tammy: If you're a teacher or employer, remember that people who stutter have the same right to education and employment as anyone. Look at what they *can* do instead of thinking about their stutter.

Carol: You know there is professional help for stuttering!

In some countries, help is available through Speech Pathologists or Speech and Language Therapists. They can offer different types of therapy for children and adults. So, if you can, see a therapist. Therapy for children before school age is the most effective.

Tammy: So remember, we can help a person who stutters by

Being patient...giving them time... and not trying to fill in the words for them. Treat them just as you would anyone else...and listen and be interested in what they're saying. This will help to give them confidence to keep talking.

Carol: In some communities, there are self-help groups or associations of people who stutter. These groups give support and have some good information about stuttering.

If you or someone you know can look on the internet, search for information for your country in the International Stuttering Association website or you could think of forming a support group to help other people you know who stutter.

Carol: Welcome back to Women of Hope. We want to tell you a story about a man called Andraé Crouch who began to stutter after something frightening happened to him when he was just 3 years old.

This is what he said: "I was on my way to get some ice cream right down the street from where my folks had a business, when a fellow picked me up and started running with me. My folks heard me when I let out a yell. Right then, the guy dropped me. I remember, that's when I started stuttering."

From then until he was 14 yrs old, Andraé's twin sister, Sandra, often spoke for him.

Tammy: What a frightening experience for a little child. Andrae's father, Benjamin Crouch, had a street ministry, and visited people in hospitals and in prison. Andraé was eleven years old when his father was invited to preach at a small church in a

farming community. The church didn't have a pastor so the bishop invited Andraé's father to become the pastor. That first Sunday, his father asked him to come up front. He said, "Andraé, if God gave you the gift of music to play and sing for him would you do it for his glory all your life?" Andraé said, "Yes daddy." A couple of weeks later, his father asked him to come up as the congregation was singing. He said, "If you're gonna play, play." Andraé found the key, and started to play the piano. As he got a little older, he started to write songs, and lead a choir.

One day, Andraé's father said, "Andraé, you never stutter when you sing. Why don't you act like you're singing when you answer a question?" So when someone would ask him, "How are you doing?" he would answer, [singing] "*I'm doing all right. And I'm doing all right. Da-da.*" Andraé said, "That's the way I started singing, and that's the way I got out of stuttering."

Carol: Andraé also said, "Our mother and father taught us how to pray and taught us that Jesus was our best friend. So whenever we were in trouble, we always knew that Jesus was never going to leave us no matter what."

He wrote some beautiful Christian songs that are now well known. Let's listen to one.

Tammy: Comment on the song (and you can mention, if appropriate that he sang that song at Michael Jackson's funeral).

Carol: After Andraé's parents died he put aside his music career and became the pastor of his father's church, and he's still there. He still writes and produces music. But he said that nothing is more rewarding to him and his sister Sandra than helping people come to know Jesus.

In 2004, Andraé received a star on the Hollywood walk of fame. It's a reminder of how God used a boy who could barely talk to bring the message of Jesus Christ to millions of people...even if that meant never having a number one song on the music charts again.

Tammy: That really shows us what's in Andraé's heart, doesn't it? He is much more concerned about telling others about Jesus than he is about being famous and making money from his music.

Carol: And I think there are two interesting things we can learn about stuttering from Andraé's story...

Firstly that it *can* be caused by something traumatic that happens to you.

And secondly singing can help a person who stutters. If you can't get your words out sometimes – try singing them!

Tammy: I know someone who stutters when he talks to one person, but never when he's preaching to a whole church full of people!

Isn't that amazing? We're going to share some thoughts from our friend Stevie about what's in your heart.

Tammy: We're together on Women of Hope and Carol's going to tell us what Stevie wrote for us. Stevie has cerebral palsy and it is sometimes hard to understand her words too, though she's very smart. That's why Carol reads her words. Let's get comfortable and listen. . . .

Carol: This is what Stevie wrote...

"Are there things in your heart that you're not proud of? Wrong things? Dark things? Do you ever think about those things...and wish that they weren't there...that you were a better person? You might really want to get rid of those things from your heart, but no matter how you try, you just can't do it.

There are things in my heart that I'm not proud of. I want to be a loving person. Do you want to be a loving person too?

In God's Word, the Bible, there's a small part that describes what love is. Let me read it to you.

'Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and keeps going - through every situation. (1 Corinthians 13:4-7 NLT)

When I read those words from the Bible, I'm reminded of the things in my heart that are wrong. Can you remember what the first thing was about love?

Yes, love is patient. That's right. Do you ever get impatient with anyone? I know I do. And then it says...love is not jealous, proud or rude. At times I can be rude, or proud or jealous. It also says that love is not irritable, which means, it doesn't get angry easily. Sometimes there are people that I get frustrated with very quickly. I really want to accept them for who they are, but I don't seem to be able to do it.

And then of course there's forgiving: it's often hard to forgive. And sometimes it's hard not to judge others...we might decide what they're like, when we don't really know them yet. You know, even if we know somebody well, we don't completely understand who they are, do we?

When we think about the wrong things...the unloving things in our hearts, it's very easy to get discouraged, isn't it? I often think about how those things make God feel.

How do *you* think they make God feel?

I think they hurt his heart. This is because God is good in every way. He is perfect. He delights in everything that is good. He is a God of perfect love. So anything that is *not* loving hurts his heart.

But the truth is we can't love each other completely. We can't change our hearts into completely loving ones. I feel sad that the things that are sometimes in my heart hurt God's heart. I would like to change my heart so that it doesn't cause him pain. But I just can't by myself.

But that's not the only way that God feels about us. You know, he really loves us, just as we are. He *delights* in us, and wants to spend time with us.

God knew that we wouldn't be able to change our *own* hearts, to make them right. That's why he sent his son, Jesus, for us. Jesus came to this earth and lived a perfect life. He never thought or did anything wrong. Jesus came to die on a cross. He did not deserve to die on a cross, but he chose to do this to take *our* punishment, so that we wouldn't have to be punished for the wrong things we do and say and think.

So that means, that if you're sorry for the unloving things that are in your heart, and you ask God to forgive you, he surely will. He won't stay angry towards you, or want to punish you, because Jesus has already taken your punishment.

But God doesn't just forgive us. He helps us to change our hearts. He makes our hearts clean. God's Word, the Bible says: 'If we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just and will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all wickedness.' (1 John 1:9 NLT)

Now that doesn't mean that we will become perfectly loving people straight away. No...God doesn't change us quickly. He chooses to help us to change and become more like him little bit, by little bit. This means we need to trust him and ask him to help us to change what's in our hearts. When we think, or do, or say something wrong, we need to ask him for his forgiveness. He always forgives us when we tell him we're sorry and really mean it. When we share our lives with him and spend time with him...just talking to him, we can learn more about who *he* is. We receive his love into our hearts and begin to understand that he accepts us, *just the way we are*. The more we receive his perfect love and acceptance of *us*, the more we can love and accept *others*.

Even though there are sometimes wrong things in our hearts, God still wants to bless us, and to use us to bless others. You might be thinking, 'I don't deserve God's blessings.'

I think that sometimes, too, and...well...that *is* true. But God loves you unconditionally. He wants to be good to you and to use you for good no matter what...just like when a mother loves her child and wants only good for her child, even when he or she sometimes disobeys.

Have you ever noticed that we do whatever we're thinking about? If we start thinking about food, we'll probably get ourselves something to eat, won't we? When we're angry at ourselves, for the wrong things that are in our heart, we struggle more with them. But if we look at how good God is, and how much he loves and accepts us, we can accept ourselves. Then we can let him change us...and help us to be more loving...more like him."

Tammy: Wow. Thank you Stevie for those lovely words you wrote for us...and thank you Carol for sharing them with us. It's time for us to go now.

Tammy: We do hope you will be with us again. Have a great week filled with God's blessings.

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