

Public Speaking is Now Easy: Kevin's Story

Our 6th grader was panicking, changing words, and was losing a battle to stuttering. His formerly cyclical stuttering condition rapidly progressed following incidents of teasing and other embarrassing experiences. We needed a stuttering specialist immediately.

Our now 12-year old son, Kevin, struggled with speech issues during his elementary school years. Initially he struggled with articulation issues. These were successfully corrected during a year of speech therapy with a private speech therapist, Sharon Wexler. We breathed a sigh of relief.

When Kevin was in 4th and 5th grades, he started stuttering. The stuttering would come in waves, sometimes it was frequent and then sometimes it would almost completely go away. But when Kevin started 6th grade at his new middle school, the stuttering became intense and relentless. His friends were starting to tease him and his teachers called me to indicate serious concern. And at this point, Kevin was embarrassed and very frustrated. I called our old therapist, Sharon Wexler, who immediately recommended Tim Mackesey. Ironically Tim had a cancellation that very day and by that afternoon Kevin had had his first appointment. Less than one year later Kevin no longer stutters.

Kevin's progress is best highlighted by two talks he was asked to give. Shortly before Kevin started stuttering therapy with Tim, he was asked to give a talk to our church congregation, a gathering of several hundred people. Before giving his talk, we went through it and took out all of the "problem" words, words that Kevin usually stuttered through. He did manage to give the talk without stuttering, but simply because we had taken out all of the troublesome words – a successful avoidance strategy but definitely not the way to solve the stuttering problem. Ironically, upon completing stuttering therapy with Tim, Kevin was asked to give another talk to our church congregation. This time, Kevin simply gave the talk, flawlessly. No doctoring the talk this time because stuttering was no longer a concern. Kevin delivered the talk perfectly, with not even a hint of stuttering.

Needless to say, we will be forever grateful for Tim, both for his professional knowledge and ability and for his kind and gentle manner in helping Kevin to successfully stop stuttering.

Jeri and Steve Colton

Addendum by Tim

First of all, I am always blessed to work with such devoted parents. Therapy is a like a triad: clinician, client, parents/family. We all support the pws.

Neurosemantics was a huge part of Kevin's recovery process. I used Time-Line therapy to "edit" and reframe the painful memories of teasing. Otherwise the "frames" (irrational beliefs and personalization) connected to these incidents will result in

anticipatory anxiety before and during oral reports, oral reading, introductions, and other situations. Early sessions with Kevin always started with “editing movies.” That means re-imprinting any frustrating or embarrassing moments before he became stable. I find children as young as age seven have vivid memories of painful speech incidents and they can participate in these cognitive reorganization therapies. Conversational reframing allowed me to help change the meaning of stuttering within Kevin.

Traditional behavioral therapy- stuttering modification- was taught so that Kevin could perform in-block correction. Kevin was able to “freeze” during a stutter and begin the word in unison with a gentle exhale.

Kevin is very verbal in the classroom now. In addition, he has opportunities to speak to his entire church- several hundred people. He reports eagerly accepting these speaking engagements. That is the opposite of fear and avoidance, isn't it? Kevin has freedom of speech.