



PENNSYLVANIA PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

416 Forster Street • Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17102-1748 • Telephone 717-232-3817 • Fax 717-232-7294
<http://www.papsy.org>

WHAT CAUSES STUTTERING?

By Jacqueline B. Sallade, Ed.D.

All children stutter as they are learning to talk. The continuation of stuttering beyond the pre-school years is due to the child associating speech with tension. Adults may have drawn attention to the child's speech by making such comments as, "Get it out!" or "Say it slowly." Worse yet, the child may have been ridiculed, or there may be pressure from parents or teachers who impatiently finish the child's statements.

As a result, the child becomes self-conscious of speech, so rather than letting it flow naturally, he or she repeats, hesitates, and blocks when speaking. Then the child becomes even more self-conscious, and a cycle of emotional and physical tension sets in, in most speaking situations.

To help a child who stutters, adults must listen and respond patiently to *what* the child says, not *how*. Speech therapy is necessary and in some cases, psychological counseling can be helpful.

Talk to someone who can help. If you would like the name of a qualified psychologist in your area, please try our Psychologist Locator.