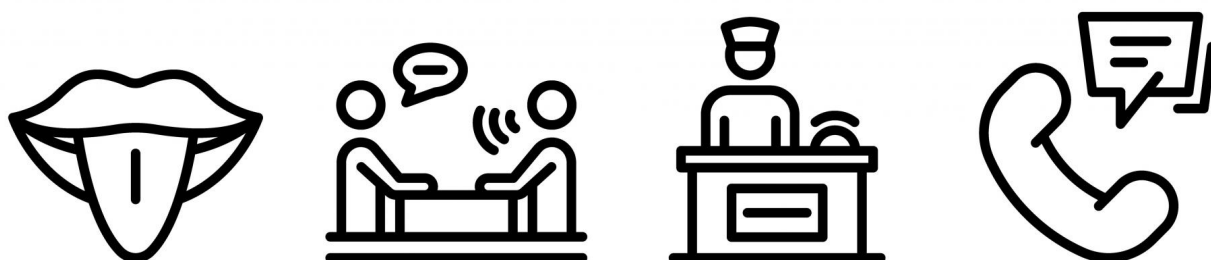




## **Stuttering: my professional knowledge, experience and recommendations to speech therapists and people with speech disorders**



### **Stuttering and logoneurosis: what is the difference?**

There is an opinion that logoneurosis is a scientific term for stuttering, but there is no scientific basis for it. If we examine the International Classification of Diseases, we see a term “stuttering”, but we cannot find a term “logoneurosis”. If we examine a clinical, psychological and pedagogical classification of speech disorders, we see “stuttering” again, but we cannot find “logoneurosis”. In modern speech therapy stuttering is defined as a disorder of speech tempo, rhythm and fluidity of speech, which are connected with muscle spasms in speech organs. The terms “logoneurosis” and “stuttering” are not synonyms. Moreover, they do not always combine with each other, especially in childhood. Logoneurosis can be a part of stuttering. Logoneurosis is an epiphenomenon, which appears with experience and worsens symptomatology of an uncoordinated spasmodic disorder of speech.

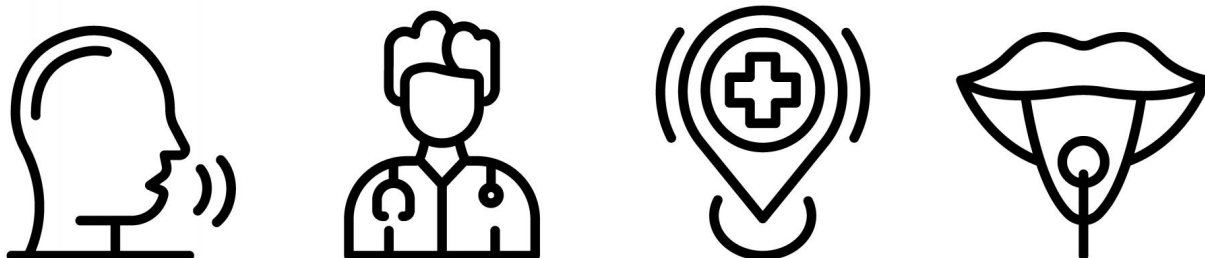
### **Why do some people stutter and others do not?**

As usual, a person starts to stutter at the age of 2-4, less often – from the age of 7, and it is not usually typical for a teenager, but stuttering can happen at this stage of life too. There is an interesting fact: only one child in a hundred of the same age starts stuttering and it is more likely that a stutterer is a boy. Although there is a lot of scientific data today, the causes of this phenomenon have not found yet. However,

scientists agree that stuttering happens because of several factors. For instance, stuttering moments can happen when there is a combination of an inherited predisposition and a single psychological trauma. These factors trigger only in the period of child development when speech is more vulnerable. It is a period of formation of a speech system and hemispheric asymmetry.

## **Can stuttering happen unexpectedly?**

Sudden stuttering is a hallmark of stuttering. It happens unexpectedly both for parents and a child. Some adults remember the moment from their childhood when stuttering moments happened and they found it hard to speak at home or at school. If a person tries to establish causes of stuttering moments and minimize their influence, a prognosis for fluidity of speech will be quite optimistic. Parents can make a list of situations when stuttering moments are severer and get rid of them temporarily or permanently. It is possible to get fluidity of speech back if actions are taken in time.



## **A child began to stutter: what should parents do?**

Firstly, parents should be calm and should not overreact. Parents' anxiety and worries do not go unnoticed and affect child's behavior. Secondly, parents should take actions immediately and ask specialists, such as a speech therapist, psychiatrist and neuropsychiatrist, for help. Parents should avoid:

- waiting for the moment when stuttering will disappear by itself;
- asking their children to speak normally. It does not work because a child does not control stuttering moments;
- making children pay attention to the problem. It is possible that they overlook stuttering moments or do not identify the problem;

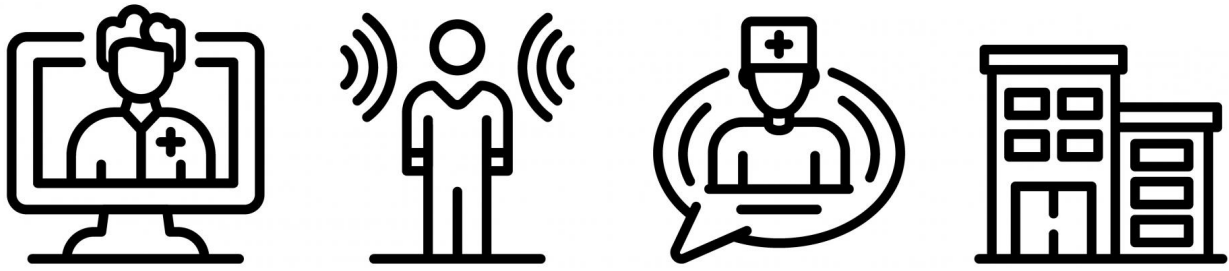
- consulting unqualified specialists. Their help can do harm and worsen the situation with stuttering moments;
- blaming themselves or relatives. Nobody makes a decision to begin stuttering and nobody is guilty in this situation.

## **Can stuttering disappear by itself?**

Stuttering does not disappear by itself. This problem has a tendency to become more serious later. Physiological iterations can disappear by themselves in childhood. Iterations are a type of stuttering moments which appear in speech when children learn to apply a language system in new situations. Only a specialist can distinguish between physiological iterations and stuttering with the help of a thorough check-up. If you think that your child started stuttering, you should make an appointment with a speech therapist, neurologist and child psychiatrist. Being on the safe side and taking actions in time are better than waiting for the moment when stuttering moments become severer and initial stuttering transforms into a chronic form.

## **Is stuttering a habit?**

Stuttering is not a habit. This is a severe speech disorder which cannot be controlled. Nobody makes a decision to begin stuttering and wants to stutter. We must admit that we do not compare eyesight disorders or hearing disorders with a habit. Unfortunately, people regard stuttering and other speech disorders as a habit quite often. It is true that new habits form when people begin to stutter, for example, they carefully choose partners to communicate with and choose a special manner of speech. Other habits which appear because of stuttering are a kind of a stratagem that makes speech more flowing. Such habits are various, their main aim is to eliminate difficulties in speech, adapt to social life and communication with people. Stutterer`s habitual actions can be productive and unproductive. Productive habits help to overcome and minimize stuttering moments. Regular classes with a speech therapist, attending remedial courses, making a range of interests wider and communication with different people are all the examples of productive habits. Refusing to communicate, focusing on speech and personality problems, strict control over speech are the examples of unproductive habits.



## **Is it better to work on stuttering in a group or individually?**

When an adult or parents of a child decide to start working on stuttering, they should choose: work in a group or individually. Group therapy is suitable for people who suffer from loneliness and isolation because of stuttering. A person can meet other people with similar speech problems and communicate with them. It is a part of a therapeutic effect which has a strong influence on teenagers. Advantages of group work:

- support from other members
- creation of a model of society
- getting pleasure from communication
- personal examples of overcoming difficulties

Although group therapy has its advantages, it is not suitable for everyone. Some people intentionally choose individual sessions with a speech therapist. In this case they can count on absolute confidentiality. It gives a feeling of safety.

During individual sessions people can:

- get more attention from a specialist
- create a model of a dialogue of face-to-face communication
- get recommendations
- examine in detail speech difficulties and work on them

**Which specialist is the most important for a stutterer: a neuropsychiatrist, speech therapist or psychologist?**

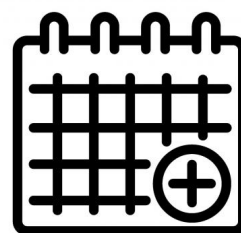
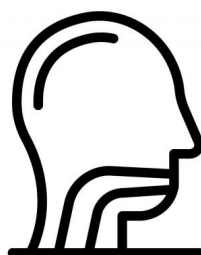
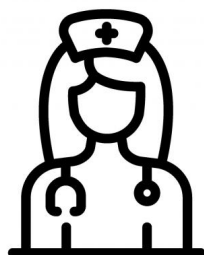
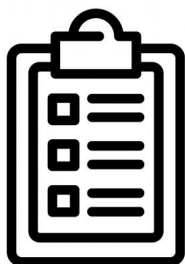
It is difficult to choose for stuttering therapy. It must be collaborative work of a psychiatrist, speech therapist and psychologist to eliminate such a difficult problem as stuttering. All these specialists make a contribution and play a significant part: a psychiatrist concludes if pharmacological therapy is necessary or not, a speech therapist helps to overcome speech problems, a psychologist works on personality problems. This model of speech therapy is implemented only in several therapy centers across the world, including Russia. It is common practice for children, teenagers and adults who stutter to visit different specialists at different times. I recommend such a scheme of correction in this case:

- at first, visit a neuropsychiatrist or psychiatrist
- then take a course with a speech therapist
- consolidate the results during individual consultations with a psychologist

## **What methods are better to use in speech therapy?**

There is a big variety of methods in stuttering therapy. Some methods form special breathing, voice and fluidity of speech techniques, which need to be mastered and used by a stutterer in everyday life in order to reduce stuttering moments. For example, there is a tapping technique, when every word or syllable is accompanied by a hand. Stutterer`s fluidity of speech becomes better with the help of it, but speech sounds unnaturally and becomes less emotional and fluent. Having extensive work experience I can say that a more reliable and natural for speech method of working on stuttering is integrated speech therapy that involves:

- an increase in a level of communicative and linguistic competences
- an improvement in main components of a language: phonetics, vocabulary, grammar and intonation
- an improvement in communicative speech characteristics: clarity, accuracy and logic of oral speech
- development of verbal creativity: original usage of different linguistic means in oral speech.



## **What actions should be taken on a daily basis to make stuttering less noticeable?**

It depends on a lifestyle. If a person can take a short holiday and take a speech therapy course, then it is better to work on stuttering every day and concentrate on classes. If a person cannot take a holiday and wants to work on stuttering, this work should not be a priority in daily life and should be done not more frequently than 2 or 3 times a week at the scheduled time. It is important to understand that speech as an automatic skill is not needed to be constantly controlled. It tires the nervous system and makes stuttering moments more noticeable. A person should do logopedic and psychotherapeutic practice regularly and systematically, but not on a daily basis. It should become a good habit, but not a fixed idea.

## **I am an adult and I suffer from stuttering. What should I do to eliminate it and improve my speech? What should I start with?**

At first, I recommend to decide on motives for dealing with this problem if a person wants to achieve targeted results. It is important to understand goals of speech therapy: it can be a desire to improve communication skills, find another job or just learn how to overcome speech difficulties. The most important thing to remember is that if the goals are realistic and achievable, then these steps will be clearer and more specific:

1. Find a speech therapist or a speech clinic that suits your needs
2. Decide on a form of work: group work or individual work with a specialist

3. Decide how often it is possible to attend classes
4. Make a list of expected outcomes

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