

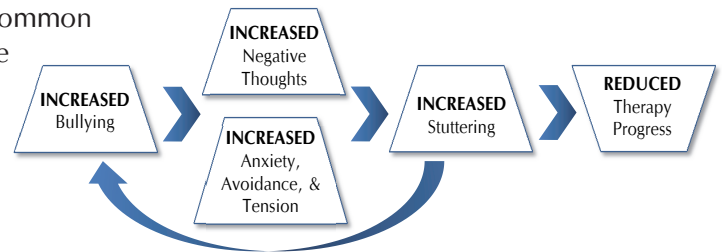
Practical Tips:

Helping Children Who Stutter Minimize Bullying*

Bullying can take many forms and occur in different ways. It can occur when one child makes hurtful comments about another; it can occur when a child pushes or intimidates another; and it can occur when a child stirs up conflicts or disagreements that set friends against each other or against another child. It can also occur via social media and over the Internet. Thus, bullying can be verbal, physical, relational, and even long-distance.

Bullying Hurts

Regardless of the form it takes, bullying is a frightening experience that can have tragic consequences. Bullied children may experience diminished self-worth, reduced performance in school, social rejection, depression, and feelings of helplessness. Bullied children may isolate themselves from their surroundings, and some have even taken their own lives when they felt that there was no solution to the problems they faced. This has even happened with children who stutter! Other, more common effects for children who stutter include increased negative thoughts and emotions, as well as increased avoidance behaviors. These lead to more severe stuttering and, ultimately, result in reduced progress in therapy.



SLPs can help!

Fortunately, there is much that SLPs can do to help children minimize the effects of bullying. Here are six steps that you can take now as part of a comprehensive intervention program for minimizing bullying.

Step 1: Teach children about stuttering so they experience fewer negative reactions to their speaking difficulties and gain a greater sense of control over their speech. The more our students understand about stuttering, the less likely they will be to feel “out of control” of their speech (and of speaking situations) when they stutter.

Step 2: Teach children about bullying so they recognize that it’s not their fault that they are being bullied. Also, help them learn that not all people who comment on their speech are actually trying to bully them. Some people are genuinely curious, and this gives us a great opportunity to teach others about stuttering.

Step 3: Help children think differently about stuttering by increasing their self-esteem and desensitizing them to stuttering so bullying will not have as great a negative impact on their life.

Step 4: Help children develop appropriate responses that minimize bullying without making a situation worse. Simple, matter-of-fact statements about stuttering can defuse a situation and reduce the likelihood of bullying.

Step 5: Help children educate their peers about stuttering and bullying to minimize the likelihood that other children will participate as “bystanders” in the bullying situation.

Step 6: Teach parents and others about stuttering, stuttering therapy, and bullying so they can support their children—and you—as you all work together to minimize bullying.

The most important part of all of these steps involves **education**. The more people understand about stuttering (and bullying), the better. Full details are available in our *Minimizing Bullying* program, a comprehensive set of materials that includes workbooks for children who stutter, parents, and teachers/administrators, so everyone can work together to minimize the negative effects of bullying and make a positive change in a child’s life.

*Excerpted and adapted from Murphy, Quesal, Reardon-Reeves, & Yaruss, J.S. (2013). *Minimizing bullying for children who stutter: A guide for SLPs*. McKinney, TX: Stuttering Therapy Resources, Inc.