



# Talking About Stuttering: A Necessary Step to Effective Advocacy for SLPs, Parents and their Children

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The first session of the Spring 2Day Conference highlighted the importance of talking about and advocating for stuttering.

In the news recently, stuttering has become a hot topic. Joe Biden, a person who stutters, won the presidency. Brayden Harrington, a mentee of Biden, impressed the American public with his public speaking abilities as a person who stutters during the Democratic National Convention.

However, even though stuttering awareness has increased, how does the general public view stuttering? With the trend of speech-language pathology graduates increasing, how is this new wave of speech therapists going to advocate for stuttering?

Dr. Courtney Byrd, PhD, CCC-SLP had all of the answers for those burning questions in this session. (Byrd is the founding director of the Michael and Tami Lang Stuttering Institute at the University of Texas at Austin.)

Unfortunately, not every clinician graduates with an idea of how to talk about and advocate for a client's stutter. For example, Dr. Byrd shared that most graduates of speech-language pathology programs do not interact with a person who stutters in their education. Because of their lack of education about stuttering, their interactions with clients who stutter are not always beneficial. Many times, clinicians will avoid using the word "stuttering" with their clients and instead use "bumpy speech" to describe disfluency.

Dr. Byrd is a proponent of doing the exact opposite with people who stutter.

The approach Dr. Byrd prefers is to have people who stutter feel more comfortable about their disfluency by talking about it openly with others. In this presentation, she shared videos of young children speaking in public and disclosing their stutter to a room full of strangers. Dr. Byrd's experience is when people who stutter openly talk about stuttering, they gain greater self-acceptance of their speech and become a more confident speaker,

In the videos Dr. Byrd shared, you saw the faces of young children light up and their posture became stronger when telling strangers they stutter. As a person who stutters myself, it really opened my eyes to how important disclosing can be for myself, for other people who stutter, and for the general public.

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*Author Lexi Hewitt is currently an undergrad studying education and hopes to earn a graduate degree and become a counselor and mental health advocate. Lexi has served as a mentor in the NSA's Generations program. She is a massive Sara Bareilles fan and volunteers her time as an NSA Ntern.*