Stuttering Therapy for Adolescents: Beyond Technique

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What Needs to be Changed and Who Decides?

• Teens may come to therapy with partially formed notions of why they are there, and what they want. They may have vague feelings and ideas about stuttering that have led them to decide that they want to make some kind of change…OR

• They may be contemplating some kind of change to which they are not yet ready to commit (Proschaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992).

• They may believe that they want to make a change in their speech, but it may be the case that what they want more is to change the way they feel about their speech and themselves, or the way their parents feel and think (and act) about their stuttering.

• Many of the challenges that we face as we try to help teenagers to make changes are rooted in the inherent nature of adolescence.
The “Common Factors” in Treatment Responsiveness

Therapist-Client Alliance 30%

Extratherapeutic Change – Client and Family Strengths and Challenges 40%

Expectancy (Placebo) 15%

Technique 15%

Lambert & Bergin (1994)
Asay & Lambert (1999)

Tools For Change

Changing Talking
- Soft starts/easy onsets/light contacts
- Changing rate (prolonged speech, phrasing and pausing)

Changing Stuttering
- Voluntary stuttering
- Holding & tolerating a moment of stuttering
- In-block corrections/pullouts
- Post-block corrections/cancellations

Tools For Change

Self-modeling – watching oneself perform optimally enhances generalization and maintenance of treatment effects (Bray & Kehle, 2001; O’Brian et al., 2003; Prins & Ingham, 2009).

Self-management – self-observation and self-evaluation helps individuals to gain a sense of control over their behavior.
What Do We Mean by “Motivation?”

- Motivation reflects readiness for change, a dynamic psychological state.
- Readiness to change associated with the client’s ambivalence toward change.
- EVERYONE has the potential to change AND we are all experts about ourselves

Motivational Interviewing

(Behrman, A. (2006))

- Lack of motivation, or “readiness” to change is a perceptual problem that can be changed, not a personality characteristic.
- Readiness to change can be influenced by the therapist
Motivational Interviewing

- A style of interpersonal interaction that facilitates client’s compliance with therapy participation.

- Rooted in the therapist’s ability to LISTEN and skill in initiating and maintaining a direct, constructive and neutral discussion about behavior change and how it can be achieved.

Motivational Interviewing

- Based on the Transtheoretical or “Stages of Change” model described by Prochaska and colleagues at the University of Rhode Island Cancer Prevention Research Center (CPRC).

- The “Stages of Change” model accounts for the way in which people change behavior...from lack of awareness through maintenance of behavioral change.

Transtheoretical Model: The Stages of Change (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1984)

- Precontemplation
- Contemplation
- Preparation
- Action
- Maintenance
- Termination
Precontemplation

- Precontemplators typically don’t see the solution because they can’t see the problem.
- Resist change; denial and avoidance are common defenses.
- Often are demoralized: they feel their situation is hopeless.

Contemplation

- Begin to acknowledge and understand problem, seek solutions.
- Likely far from making actual commitment to action: may have indefinite plans for ‘the next six months or so’.
- Fear of failure may keep them searching for a more complete understanding or generating more solutions.
- Transition to Preparation stage marked by focus on solution rather than the problem, and thinking about the future more than the past.

Preparation

- Planning to take action within the next month; making the final adjustments before beginning to change behavior.
- May appear committed/ready for action but have not yet resolved their ambivalence.
- Resolution of ambivalence increases chance of successful change.
Action

- Overt modification of behaviors and surroundings; changes are more visible to others during this stage
- Efforts to maintain this action are most important; action does not equal change

Maintenance

- Actively working to maintain change, prevent lapses/ relapses
- Indefinite; may last from as short as 6 months to a lifetime

Termination

- Former addiction/ problem no longer presents temptation or threat
- Complete confidence that can cope without fear of relapse
- No effort required to maintain change

- Used a modified “Stages of Change” questionnaire (McConnaughy et al., 1983).
- 32 statements, 5 point Likert scale (1=strongly agree; 5=strongly disagree).
- 44 AWS
- Four factor model best fit for the data: Precontemplation, Contemplation, Action, Maintenance

Sample Statements

- I am actively working on my stuttering
- I am really working hard to change
- At times my stuttering is difficult, but I’m working on it
- Even though I’m not always successful in changing, I am at least working on my stuttering
- Anyone can talk about changing; I’m actually doing something about it

Sample Statements

- I’ve been thinking that I might want to change something about my speech
- Maybe speech therapy will be able to help me
- I have started working on my stuttering but I would like help
- I’m hoping speech therapy will help me to better understand my stuttering
- I am finally doing some work on my stuttering
- I have a problem and I really think I should work on it
Therapist Skills

- Expressing empathy
- Reduce ambivalence through focusing on inconsistencies; we tend to be less ambivalent if we can defend our actions (i.e. verbal problem solving is good!)
- Roll with resistance
- Recognize and reinforce self-efficacy through methods of “positive psychology” (i.e., signature strengths, “what’s RIGHT with you.”

Discussion Techniques

*Open-ended questions*

“What would you like to share with me that would help me understand what you’d like to learn or change as we work together?”

“If you could change anything about your stuttering, what would it be?”

“What do you think would need to happen for you to see change in your stuttering?”
Therapist Skills

**Affirming statements**

- Client – “I want to focus on what I’m saying but I can’t when I have to pay attention to these strategies at the same time.”

- Therapist – “You have a lot of interesting things to say and you like to talk to people. It’s important to you that you are able to express yourself.”

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Therapist Skills

**Reflective listening**

- Client – “I have talked like this for a long time. It’s basically the way I talk, and everyone recognizes that.”

- Therapist – “So you feel your speech is a part of who you are, and you and the people around you accept that.”

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Therapist Skills

**Summarizing**

“So when you stutter a lot over the course of a few days, you feel worried and frustrated. When you were able to use the strategies you learned in therapy, you worried that you wouldn’t be able to maintain control…that you would “lose it.” What have I left out?”
Therapist Skills

Eliciting change talk

Therapist – “How important is it for you to talk more smoothly? On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all important and 10 is extremely important, where would you say you are?”

Client – “Hmmm…about a 4.”

Therapist – “Okay, you think you’re a 4. Why not a 0?”

Client – “Well, sometimes I worry that I will stutter when I’m talking to my boss, but not all the time.” really don’t care if I’m fluent or not.”

Therapist Skills

Assessing change

Therapist – “Okay, that makes sense. You don’t like to stutter when you’re talking to your boss; you want to talk as smoothly as possible.”

Client – “Yeah, of course.”

Therapist – “What would it take for you to go from a 4 to a higher number?” Okay, you think you’re a 4. Why not a 0?”

Client – “Well, I suppose I’d have to learn to do something that I could use when I’m talking to my boss that would help me to talk more fluently. But I don’t think I need to do it all the time, because sometimes I just want to talk and not worry about whether I’m fluent or not.”

Therapist Skills

Decisional Balance and Change Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pros</th>
<th>Cons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Making a change</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td>I can hear my grandkids</td>
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Pros and Cons:

- **Pros:**
  - I can hear my grandkids
  - Have to put it on and know how to adjust it
  - It’s easier to deal with not hearing right now

- **Cons:**
  - I miss out on a lot. I feel isolated
Change Plan Worksheet

The changes I want to make are:
1.
2.
3.

The most important reasons I want to make these changes are:

The steps I plan to take in changing are:

The ways other people can help me are:


Change Plan Worksheet

I will know if my plan is working if:

Some things that could interfere with my plan are:

What I will do if the plan isn’t working: