

Have you heard of “stutter” or “stammer”? It is called “kitsuon” in Japanese. A stutter means that words do not come out smoothly when speaking. There are three types of stutter, such as repeating the same sound many times, stretching out sounds, or stopping in the middle of a word. It is said that one in a hundred people all over the world has a stutter.

I am one of those people. I have stuttered since I was in kindergarten.

Each person who stutters has different words that they are not good at pronouncing. Some of them say they cannot speak words that start with vowels, a, e, i, o, u, like “arigato”, or words that start with the sound of “k,” like “kayo-bi,” smoothly. In my case, I have had difficulty with the words that include the sounds “s,” “t,” or “ch,” like “shichi-gatsu,” “shita-gaki,” and “shite kudasai.” I often had to repeat the first sound. I also have problems with some English words. For example, “student,” “start,” and “study”.

What kind of troubles do people who stutter face? I would like to tell you about one of them in a familiar situation.

At school, giving a speech in front of class may be really hard for the student with a stutter because stress usually makes stuttering worse. Their classmates, especially in lower grades, sometimes laugh at the speech. Classmates may even ask the student why they speak so strangely or copy their speech. At school, students are not taught about stuttering in the basic curriculum. So stuttering often seems strange.

Actually, I have been in a situation like this. There was a school assembly the other day. Each club team leader gave a speech. At that time, one of the speakers stuttered many times during his speech. But he did not give up. I cheered him up in my heart. Unfortunately, many people in the audience, including my classmates, laughed out loud at his speech. It made me really surprised and angry. I could not believe that they did not understand stuttering. I thought I must do something to change this situation. That is why I decided to make this speech.

Now, I would like you to know one important point when you communicate with stutterers around you. It only takes a little consideration. Please listen to their speech until the end, even if they seem to have trouble with pronunciation. You may think that it helps if you guess the words that they want to say next. However, it does not help. People who stutter sometimes feel nervous when they speak, but they work hard to express their feelings or opinions. Interrupting them when they are trying to say a word causes strong stress.

So please do not give any advice such as “You should speak slowly,” or “Do you mean this word?” to a stutterer. All you should do is to wait until they say the word. I understand that you may want to do something for them, but the best thing you can do is just wait. That will be a great help.

Did you become interested? I hope the world will be a better place without any worry about stuttering and that everyone will feel free to communicate with each other.

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How Much Do You Know About a Stutter?