

Glossary

Cluttering

Cluttering involves behaviours that affect the flow and intelligibility of speech.

It is characterised by irregular bursts of speech that typically sound too fast and uncontrolled, with words seeming to tumble out on top of each other.

In addition to the impression of overly fast speech, speech sounds may be poorly articulated, indistinct and/or omitted and, particularly in longer words, whole syllables may be missed out entirely. The pitch or intonation of words and phrases may be unusual and contain irregular pauses. There may also be an excessive number of stops, restarts and 'ums' and 'ers' interrupting the flow of speech.

Individuals who clutter may also experience language problems such as word finding difficulties, weak grammatical structure, and an apparent lack of coherence and organisation in conversations and when telling stories.

Onset

As yet, the way that cluttering begins and develops is not well understood.

Severity

The severity of cluttering may vary depending on the nature of the speaking task. The more informal, emotional, unplanned, unstructured and linguistically complex the task, the more likely cluttering behaviours are to surface.

Assessment and diagnosis

Cluttering is a complex developmental disorder that requires a comprehensive assessment by a speech and language therapist. This should include an evaluation of speech, language and communication skills in a range of contexts. Some young children

who clutter may be misdiagnosed with a language or speech disorder or fail to receive a diagnosis at all.

Affected individuals are often unaware that they clutter or of the impact it has on their speech and communication.

Cluttering may present on its own or it may co-exist with stammering and/or other communication needs, literacy difficulties, and/or neurodevelopmental conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, dyspraxia and autistic spectrum disorder.

Intervention

Treatment typically includes developing an awareness of the cluttering, strategies to control the speed of speech, and motivating the individual to achieve change.

References

Bowen C and Snow P (2017) *Making Sense of Interventions for Children with Developmental Disorders: A Guide for Parents and Professionals*. Croyden: J & R Press Ltd

St Louis K and Schulte K (2011) 'Defining cluttering: the lowest common denominator', in D. Ward & K Scaler Scott (Eds), *Cluttering: A hand book of research, intervention and education*, p.233-253. Hove: Psychology Press

Royal College of Speech and Language Therapists. *Dysfluency*.

https://www.rcslt.org/clinical_resources/dysfluency

The British Stammering Association. *Cluttering*.
<https://www.stamma.org/search/node/cluttering/>

Ward D (2011) *Understanding Cluttering*. The British Stammering Association.

<https://www.stamma.org/speaking-out/articles/understanding-cluttering/>

International Cluttering Association

<http://associations.missouristate.edu/ica/>

Please note: Afasic does not hold copies of any referenced material. These publications should be available at academic libraries.

Organisations that can help

British Stammering Association

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Tel: 020 8983 1003

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