

Publications Review

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STUTTERING DISORDERS

Edited by William Perkins, Thieme-Stratton Inc., New York, 1984

reviewed by Marie Poulos
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Stuttering Disorders is the eighth volume in the series "Current Therapy of Communication Disorders". The series is designed to provide clinicians with reference texts for therapy of specific speech, language and hearing disorders.

This volume provides comprehensive coverage of the major stuttering treatment approaches currently used with children and adults. It is a collection of chapters contributed by well known clinicians and researchers who have had extensive clinical experience in fluency disorders. In their chapters the authors present detailed accounts of their therapy strategies, procedures and results. The outcome is an eclectic collection of ideas and methodologies for the treatment of fluency disorders.

It should be noted that Stuttering Disorders stems from an earlier publication on the same topic, "Strategies in Stuttering Therapy", edited by William Perkins. Many of the chapters are the same, a few have been updated and several new contributions have been added.

There are 18 chapters. Two are contributed by Canadian authors Einer Boberg and Debra Kully. Chapters are written in a concise, easy to read manner and organized thoughtfully in sequence.

Chapters 1-3 focus on practical concerns in three main areas. The nature of dysfluent speech, early identification and prevention of stuttering. The opening chapter, by Richard Curlee, summarizes information on stuttering onset, development and recovery and presents guidelines for case selection. The next two chapters outline stuttering prevention programs. Consideration is given to factors that contribute to stuttering and to strategies for appropriate intervention. Included are descriptions of parental counselling strategies and behavioural home intervention strategies employed by authors Dean Williams and Linda Johnson.

Chapters 4-7 describe primary treatment approaches used with children.

Emphasis is placed on a prescriptive approach to therapy in which treatment procedures are selected to meet a child's individual needs. Included are discussions of differential evaluation and treatment procedures used by authors Martin Adams, Hugo Gregory and Diane Hill. The remaining two chapters provide detailed descriptions of operant-based therapy programs by Richard Shine and Bruce Ryan. Excellent summaries of the authors' well known establishment, transfer and maintenance activities are given.

Chapters 8-10 describe 3 learning-based fluency treatment approaches. Attention is given to the influence of major conditioning processes on the nature and treatment of stuttering. A fundamental chapter, by Janis Costello, describes the application of operant conditioning principles to stuttering treatment procedures. The remaining 2 chapters outline stuttering therapy approaches based on several (classical, instrumental, avoidance) conditioning processes. Included are descriptions of Woodroffe Starkweather's multiprocess behavioural approach and Joseph and Vivien Sheehan's avoidance reduction therapy.

Chapters 11-13 describe primary treatment approaches used with adults. Consideration is given to the complementary nature of speech and cognitive factors in the establishment and maintenance of fluency. Chapters by William Perkins and Richard Curlee provide excellent summaries of fluency establishing skills, and counselling procedures used to support behavioural fluency techniques. A more eclectic approach to therapy is presented by Einer Boberg in his description of an intensive adult/teen treatment program.

Chapters 14-16 focus on transfer and maintenance of fluency. Recognizing these components as important but often neglected parts of therapy, authors give consideration to the systematic organization of transfer and maintenance activities. Included are descriptions of structured transfer assignments and maintenance schedules employed by Einer Boberg, Debra Kully and Roger Ingham. An innovative self-management approach to transfer and maintenance is also discussed by Shames and Florence.

The final two chapters focus on therapy evaluation. Attention is drawn to treatment evaluation methodology and measurement credibility. A summary of procedures used in the systematic evaluation of therapy programs is presented by Gavin Andrews. The merit of these measures is critically examined by Joseph Sheehan.

In summary, Stuttering Disorders is an excellent text for therapy; admirably fulfilling the purpose for which it was designed. Chapters provide comprehensive coverage of a variety of treatment approaches in addition to addressing other relevant topical concerns. The authors have included detailed descriptions of treatment procedures or provided a suitable framework within which to work. One shortcoming of the text is its lack of integration between chapters. A short preface by the editor, before each chapter, might have linked together material presented. For students this text would be a practical sourcebook for therapy and would help them appreciate the variety of treatment approaches available. For clinicians, Stuttering Disorders would be a valuable resource for treatment and stimulus to upgrade or rethink treatment procedures.

Romeder, Jean-Marie. A Report on Self-Help Groups in Canada. Health and Welfare Canada. 1983.

reviewed by: B. Gail Frankel, Ph.D.
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This fairly brief (94 pages) report presents a good overview of the philosophy of the self-help movement. It indicates that there are many definitions of self-help, and provides that one that guides the report (p. 14). This definition states that self-help groups are, among other things, small, voluntary structures for mutual aid and the accomplishment of a special purpose. Such groups emphasize "face-to-face" social interactions and the assuming of personal responsibility by the members, the ultimate goal of which is to enhance personal identity and self-esteem.

Romeder uses a major direction in social epidemiological research to provide evidence for the potential efficacy of self-help groups, namely work in the area of social support and health. His review of this literature is both brief and selective, but it serves his purpose well. Essentially, the evidence is that social support helps individuals combat the effects of stressors in their environments with less negative health outcomes, and often with reduced mortality rates. His argument is that self-help is a form of social support.

While some data are presented from what Romeder calls a "pilot survey," these must be treated with extreme caution. They represent incomplete results from only five areas, three in Quebec, one in rural Northern British Columbia, Ottawa and Winnipeg. Although the author introduces the caution, he still discusses his findings as more representative than they really are.

Of particular interest to those in the field of human communication would be detailed information on self-help groups available for those who have speech, language or hearing disorders. Unfortunately, such information is not presented in this document. Nonetheless, the arguments for the development and use of such groups are cogent and ought to be given due consideration. One of the major contributions that Romeder makes in this report is the elucidation of the risks of professional involvement in self-help groups. It is an area that has, by and large, been overlooked by many in the field.

The types of individuals who might benefit from self-help groups include newly deafened adults, stutterers, parents of children with various communication disorders, etc. Many such groups already exist; what may not be in place is adequate awareness of these groups and referral mechanisms to them. Romeder provided a number of recommendations or suggestions to his readers and both awareness and referral are among them. It is, perhaps, an area in which we should become more involved.

Copies of this report are available in both official languages from:

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