

Cluttering

Definition:

A communication disorder resulting in decreased fluency and intelligibility that often coexists with stuttering.

Description:

An exact description of cluttering has not been accepted or agreed upon universally. In general, it is a communication disorder that results in decreased speech intelligibility and may involve one or a combination of the following areas: language, articulation, and fluency, as well as rate and self-monitoring skills.

Characteristics:

The characteristics of cluttering vary among clients, but a consistent characteristic is an excessive speech rate. More than 60 other symptoms are listed in well-known chapters and books on cluttering. Some common characteristics include:

- Monotone voice
- Indistinct, "mumbling" speech involving sound distortions and omissions.
- Errors in connected speech that are not present or less pronounced in single-word production or connected speech that is produced slowly.
- Transpositions of sounds in words, phrases, or sentences (ex: "Many people think so" becomes "Many thinkle peep so")
- Language deficiencies
- Auditory processing difficulties
- Client may be unaware of his/her speech disorder and surprised when other people do not understand him/her

Stuttering vs. Cluttering

Stuttering:

1. Disfluencies on units smaller than the word level, such as sound prolongations and sound/syllable repetitions
2. Effort/physiologic tension associated with disfluent moments
3. Typically person has awareness of disfluencies and a sense of loss of control
4. Difficulty making fluent transitions from one sound or syllable to the next.

Cluttering:

1. Disfluencies typically involve units larger than the sound or syllable level, such as word and phrase repetitions, incomplete phrases, and revisions.
2. Little apparent physiologic tension
3. Often demonstrate poor self-monitoring skills and decreased awareness of speech errors
4. Difficulty making smooth transitions from one syntactic unit to another or one lexical choice to the next or sequencing his/her message cohesively and coherently
5. Do not typically produce prolongations or tense pauses
6. Fast and/or spurty speaking rate
7. Linguistic encoding difficulties leading to poor cohesion and coherence of connected speech
8. Reduced speech intelligibility due to articulation errors secondary to fast rate

Causes:

Unknown

Diagnosing this disorder:

Since cluttering affects articulation, language, voice, and fluency, its assessment includes each of these areas.

-Individuals may not clutter in all situations. Important to examine in several contexts: Reading lists of multisyllabic words, Reading passages, Spontaneous speech

-Rate language/speech samples for:

- Intelligibility
- Naturalness
- Overall speech rate
- Regularity of rate
- Disfluencies
- Overall articulation accuracy
- Pragmatic language appropriateness

-Interview client regarding perception of speech difficulty and perception of social penalty of speech difficulty

-Writing sample analysis

- Short paragraph about vacation, etc.

- Looking for illegible writing
- Omissions of letters, syllables, words, as seen in speech

Treatment:

Two fluency-enhancing strategies can be useful in addressing cluttering: prolonged speech and reduced speech rate.

ASHA outlines that therapy should focus on:

Slowing rate (metronome, pacing boards, visuals, etc.)

Heightening monitoring

- Use video or audio-taped conversations and have client identify places where he/she failed to monitor.
- Prepare samples of worst, mediocre and best speech, have them listen/rate daily to assist with ability to monitor on-line.

Using clear speech

- "over-articulate" multisyllabic words/ discuss what they are feeling
- Imagine they are talking to a person with hearing loss

Using organized language

- Example: focusing on one topic at a time

Interacting with listeners

- taking turns in conversation at reasonable durations (such as 30 seconds)
- thinking about the listener as you speak

Reducing excessive disfluencies

- identifying mazes in his/her speech

Also important to work with parents on modeling clear speech and organized language

Resources:

Books for Clinicians:

The Source for Stuttering and Cluttering

by David Daly

- *feelings and attitudes of adolescents*
- *Structured word, phrase & sentence tasks*
- *Addresses Clinician forms for tracking progress*

- *Self-evaluation forms for client*
- *Audiotape to model speech patterns*
- *Techniques for cluttering intervention*

Support Groups:

- [A Cluttering Yahoo Group](#) by Judith Kuster (Minnesota, USA)
- [Cluttering: A Facebook Social Network for Persons Who Clutter](#) by Sr. Carol Mary Nolan (Massachusetts, USA) [Questions/comments](#)(online conference)
- [NorCal Cluttering Group – A social gathering for PWC](#) by Jonathan Wong (California, USA) [Questions/comments](#) (online conference)
- [K-12 Academic Cluttering Community](#) is a currently inactive yahoo group with only 5 members. K-12 Academics has a [short explanation about cluttering](#).

Websites:

- Video clip example <http://youtube.com/watch?v=EXtKWvYb-Y>
- International Cluttering Association <http://associations.missouristate.edu/ICA/>
Contact Kathy Scaler Scott at scalerscott1@earthlink.net

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