

## Hood's Hopefully Helpful Hints

**Stephen B. Hood, Ph.D.**

Your speech clinician has probably given you lots of suggestions for things you can do to make the process of talking easier. Regardless of whether you are working primarily on techniques to “control and modify your *stuttering*,” and/or “enhance and shape your *fluency*,” you try to do things that will help you. Hopefully, you regard the suggestions you get from your speech clinician (and also your parents and friends) as “helpful reminders.” But sometimes, you may feel that they are just nagging at you. Let’s face it ---- There are times when it is a pain in the neck to need to concentrate on your speech. There are times when you just want to forget about it. I’ll bet there are lots of times when you get so wrapped up in other things that you totally forget to work on your speech altogether. And, I’ll bet there are times when you resent it when people remind you to “work on your speech.”

As a kid and teen growing up, I often forgot to do things that I was supposed to do unless I wrote myself a reminder note. Even to this day, I often rely on post-it notes and index cards to help me remember things. Mnemonic aids (also sometimes spelled Nemonic) are methods for helping us learn and remember. ACRONYMS are a specific type of mnemonic that can help us remember things. An acronym is a word made up of the first (or first few) letters, of a series of words. For example:

NATO: **North Atlantic Treaty Organization  
SCUBA: **Self Contained Underwater Breathing Device  
NASCAR: **National Association for Stock Car Auto Racing.******

Another mnemonic method for learning is to string the first letter(s) of non-words together. Those of you who send e-mail and text messages probably know about TTYL, LOL, and FWIW:

TTYL: **Talk To You Later  
LOL: **Laughing Out Loud.  
FWIW: **For What It’s Worth.******

During the course of my career I have developed a number of mnemonics reminders that have been to be helpful to people with whom I have worked. Maybe you can use some of these, or better yet, come up with your own. You can put a mnemonic post-it-note in your school notebook, your school assignment book, on various pages in some of your schoolbooks, by the telephone, or wherever else you think they might be helpful.

Here are some examples:

1. In order to begin talking easily, and in order to maintain ongoingness in speech, you need to coordinate the release of air from your lungs with the easy initiation of sound from your voice-box, and gentle movement of your jaw, lips, and tongue as you produce sounds, syllables and words. Here are three mnemonics that might help.

- Σ AVM            Air – Voice – Movement (in your speech)
- Σ KYMR        Keep Your (Speech) Motor Running
- Σ RTSE        Remember To Start Easily

2. Sometimes, the speaking situation might be especially stressful. Ideas that come to mind are when you are working on spelling and the teacher asks you to stand beside your desk and spell a certain word, or being asked to go to the board and talk through the solution to a math or algebra problem, or giving an oral book report. Here are three more mnemonics that might help.

- Σ NNTH        No Need To Hurry
- Σ NNTW       No Need To Worry
- Σ NNTP        No Need To Panic

### Post-It-Notes

Putting post-it-notes with acronyms or mnemonics in strategic places can serve as helpful reminders. These can be your own personal, secret code that is nobody else’s business. Or, if you are working on being open about your stuttering (for example, through “advertising”) then you can tell some of your friends what the initials represent. Here are some examples that were made up by kids and teens with whom I have worked.

When Teflon was invented as a non-stick coating for cookware that helps keep food from getting stuck to the pan, I was working with Billy and teaching him to use “soft contacts” so that he could move his “speech helpers” more lightly and not jam or stick them together. Although the television advertisements touting the virtues of Non-Stick Teflon were both frequent and increasingly irritating, they had a very good effect on him. One day, he said, “Gees, Dr. Hood. – That’s what I need – A Teflon Tongue for no-stick speech.” Soon thereafter Billy coined the following:

TLT            Talk Like Teflon.

Another person I worked with had just receive his driver’s permit and was learning to drive a stick shift car. David was having a hard time coordinating a **gradual** release of the clutch while **gradually** stepping on the gas. Consequently, the car lurched, spurted and stalled a lot. His driving instructor was harping on him to “**BE GRADUAL**.” One day he said, “I’m not sure which frustrates and angers me the most, the way I botch the clutch or the way I botch my speech.” A few days later he coined the following post-it-note:

TTBG        Try To Be Gradual.

I hope the above examples are enough to get you started.

Maybe you can develop your own personal list of mnemonics the way Billy and David did. Maybe your speech clinician will be able to help you.

----- **END** -----