Stuttering and the Internet: Some Practicalities

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What Is the *Clinician's* Role?

- The internet can be a great help to our clients…

  …or it can be a great hindrance

- If we suggest that our clients access the internet, we should make sure it actually helps them

Information Overload

- Search term:

    "Stuttering"

- Websites found:

    "Eight trillion, four hundred billion, three hundred thousand and two"

…A month on the World Wide Web can save you an hour in the library…

Eureka!

- Use *your* knowledge of stuttering to help clients narrow their searches and know when they've seen enough

  - Parents may worry that they are "missing something" and will read every page their search engine finds

  - This leaves them *more* confused than before, and this is *not* good for the child

One Size Fits... *One*

- Most sites on the internet promote a *single* point of view, but remember, **one size does *not* fit all**

- SLPs learn the most when we synthesize and integrate opinions from a variety of perspectives to develop a deeper understanding
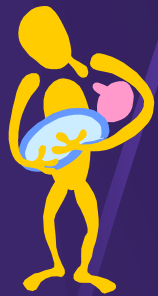
Diverse opinions about the nature and treatment of stuttering may be interesting (or even amusing) to us…

…They can be frustrating (or even frightening) for clients

What should I believe?

- It is our job to help clients sort out what they find on the internet

  - Parents *know* that what they read is too good to be true, but it's hard to get those promises out of their minds

  - They need *your* authority to help them remember that they are doing the right thing for their children

Where's My Clinician?

- Referral to the 'net is *no substitute* for *your* involvement in treatment
  - "If you don't know how to do something, you don't know how to do it with a computer" – Anon.

- Different clients need different amounts of support, based on
  - Their understanding of the internet
  - Their understanding of stuttering
  - Their *tolerance for ambiguity*

# The Internet as a useful adjunct to stuttering treatment

(Yes, it is possible…)

General Education

- Clients *can* benefit from learning about different types of treatment

  - SLPs should be aware of what info is available so we can help clients understand what they read

  - We should not feel threatened when our clients hear or ask us about alternate approaches

Guided Education

- When referring clients to the SHP…
  - Help them know *in advance* what they are looking for
  - Help them evaluate *afterwards* if they obtained the right information
  - Help them interpret what they learned and incorporate it into your treatment
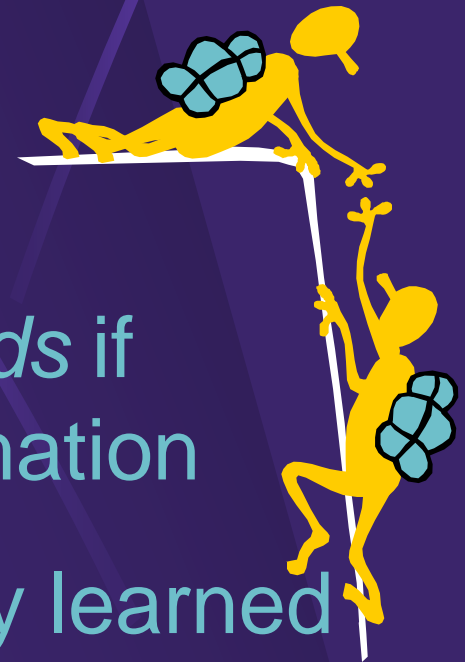
Informing ≠ Treating

- Just because a client reads some-thing, that doesn't mean they…
  - understand it
  - remember it
  - can apply it

- We need to help them incorporate what they learn into their lives

Support

- Support groups are an important component of a complete treatment
  - The 'net provides a link to the support group (Listservs, email, web pages)

- SLPs can help clients learn about their options for communicating with support group members

Treatment

- Clients and clinicians can keep in touch via email or web pages
  - Clients can ask questions about practice exercises or techniques
  - Clinicians can provide encouragement, suggestions, or feedback for exercises

- BUT…watch out for the tendency to "hide" behind the keyboard

My computer,
my clinician, and me

- Above all, we must maintain our personal contact with clients

- The internet should *enhance this* personal contact, not minimize it