

# **More Friends for Jackson**

A Children's Book

Written for the National Stuttering Association

By Nina A. Reardon, M.S. CCC-SLP

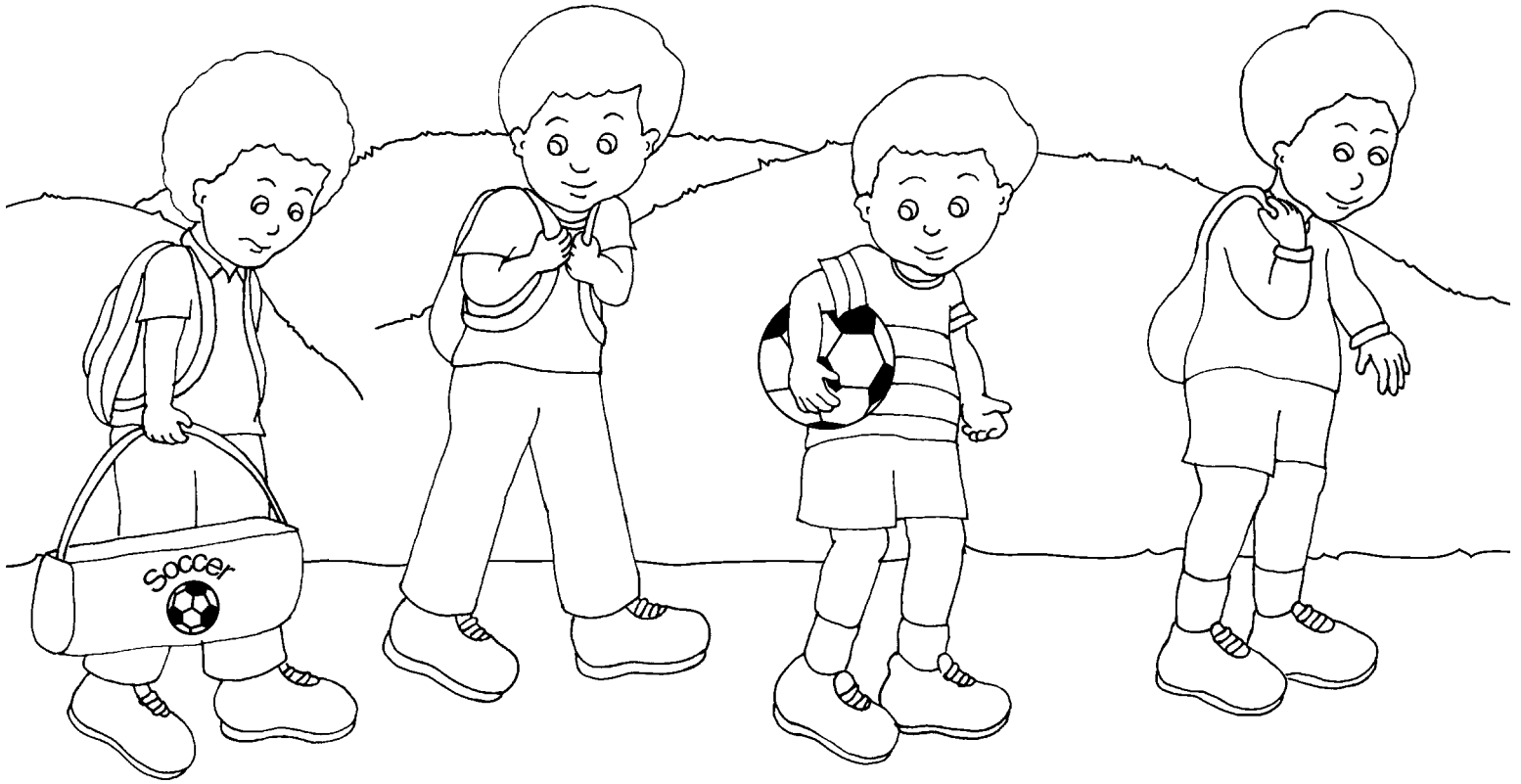
Illustrated by Brit W. Kohls • [www.art4kids.org](http://www.art4kids.org)

“Hey Jack,” called Nick, “Let’s go!”

Jack gathered his books into his book bag and hurried to the classroom door where one of his friends was waiting. Nick was rushing Jack to get to soccer practice on time.

“I-I-I’m here”, said Jackson. “L——et’s move or coach w-will be mad.”





As the boys left the school to get to the practice field, they talked and made plans for the weekend. It was Jack's turn to host the "blow-out", their term for Saturday night sleep-overs.

Most of the time Nick, Craig and Danny were patient with Jackson's stuttering. Sometimes they interrupted him when they didn't know he was stuck on a word, but they never made fun of him or made a big deal about the way he talked.

Most kids in his class were the same way. They knew Jackson as the soccer player and science lover who just happened to stutter sometimes.

Not all people were like that, though. Some people, even grown-ups made faces or finished his sentences when he got stuck. Some bigger kids even teased him and stuttered back to him. "Sp-spi-spit it out J-J-J-J-Jackson", they would say.

The teasing made Jack feel mad and even sad, sometimes. But, most of the time, he tried to ignore it. He told himself that it was THEIR problem, not his.

“Jack. Hey Jack, what’s up? You in outer space or what?” Nick’s voice broke Jackson’s daydream.

“Huh? No, said Jack. “I was just thinking.”

“Bout what?” asked Nick.

Well, can you keep a secret?” asked Jack. Nick nodded. “My parents want me to go to some youth day thing for kids who stutter. The speech teacher at school told them about it and now they want me to go.”

Jackson talked about his stuttering only with Nick. He knew the other guys would probably be OK, but he just didn’t talk with them about his speech.

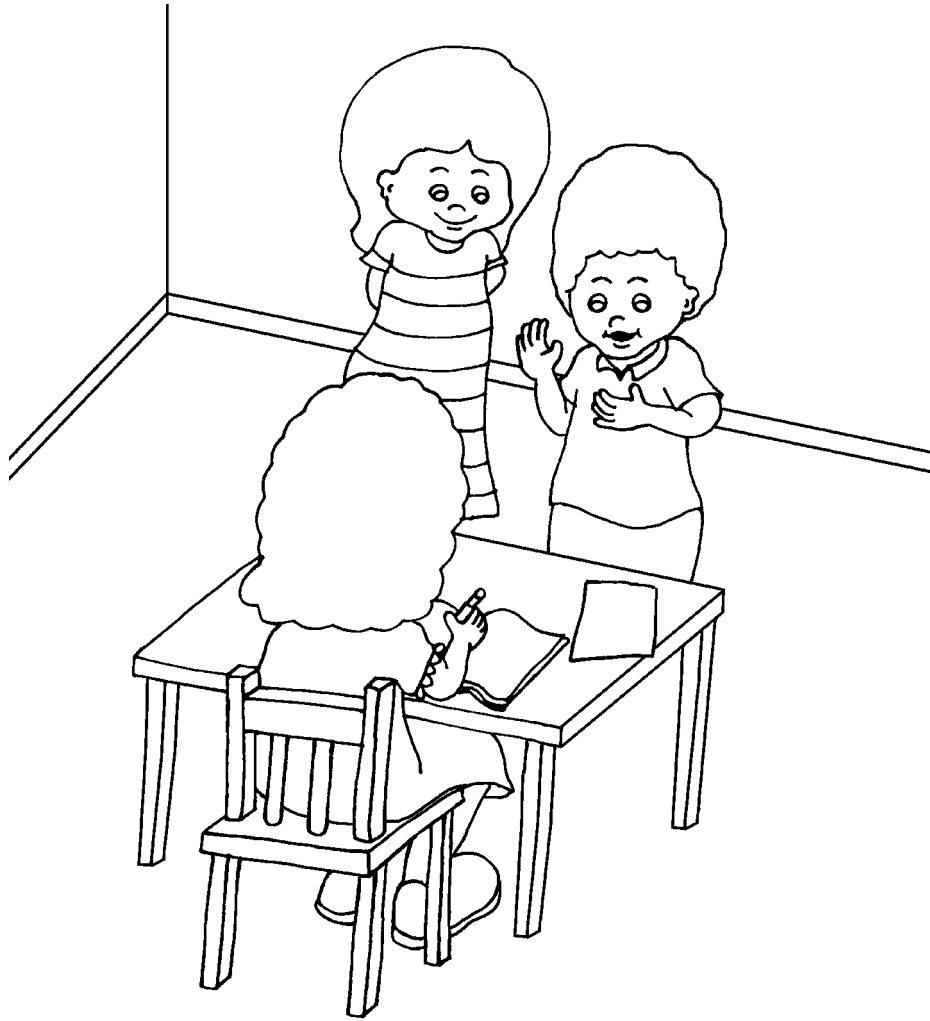
“Will that be weird or cool?” asked Nick.

“I dunno,” said Jack. “I just don’t know what it would be like, so I can’t decide if I want to go.”

“Well”, said Nick. “If you don’t like it, you can always leave.”

“I guess so”, said Jack. “Anyways, I’ll be back in time for the “blow-out” tomorrow night.”





“Lets just see what this is like, Jack”, said mom. She smiled and tapped his knee. She seemed so relaxed. He wanted to be relaxed, too, but he wasn’t.

As they walked through the door, Jack saw a bunch of kids with their parents. They were standing in line at the registration desk. The parents were busy talking and the kids were busy looking at their feet.

Jack sighed as he approached the desk. He opened his mouth to give his name, (He would never let his parents talk for him.), but nothing came out.

“Here we go again,” Jack thought.

Finally, he moved through the tension in his tongue and slid into his name. “J—— Jackson Archer.”

The plan for the day was handed out and everyone gathered in the gymnasium. There were parents, kids, teenagers, brothers and sisters and speech teachers. Everyone was going to be split into groups for the morning and then come back together for lunch

Jack was with a group of 11 kids. Most of them looked about his age. All boys and 2 girls. Jack had heard that more boys than girls stutter.

The two group leaders moved to a big room and immediately started what they called an “ice breaker.” It was meant to get everyone loosened up and give them a chance to get to know each other.

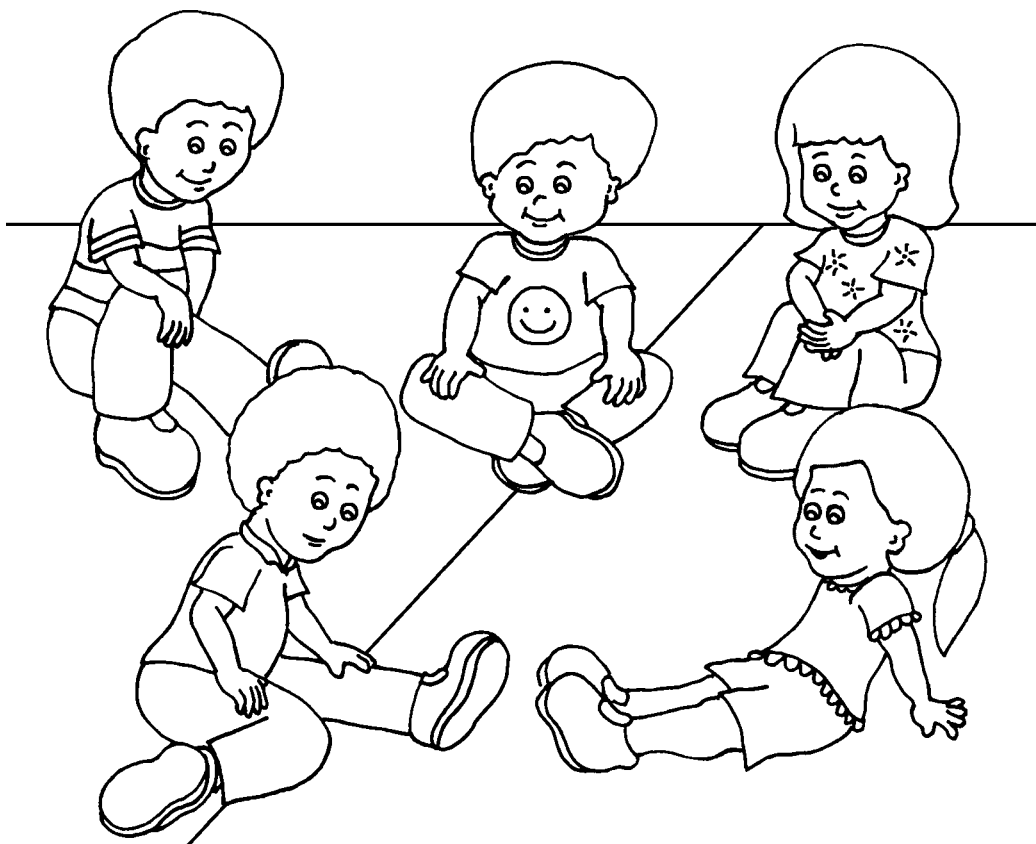
The icebreaker was kind of fun and everyone was laughing and joking by the end of it.

Jack noticed a bunch of different kinds of stuttering. Some kids stuttered a lot and some hardly at all.

The next thing was a question and answer period. Everyone got a chance to ask a question about stuttering. There were some really good questions. The group leaders answered some and other kids answered some, too.

“Not too weird, yet,” thought Jack. “I think I’ll stay at least through lunch.”

Before lunch they took a break by shooting baskets in one of the gyms. Even the girls joined in and it was cool. Jack played one on one with a guy named Corey and then sat with Corey and his parents at lunch.



"W—here do you go to school?" asked Corey. Corey's eye blinked when he stuttered.

"Woodlawn," said Jack.

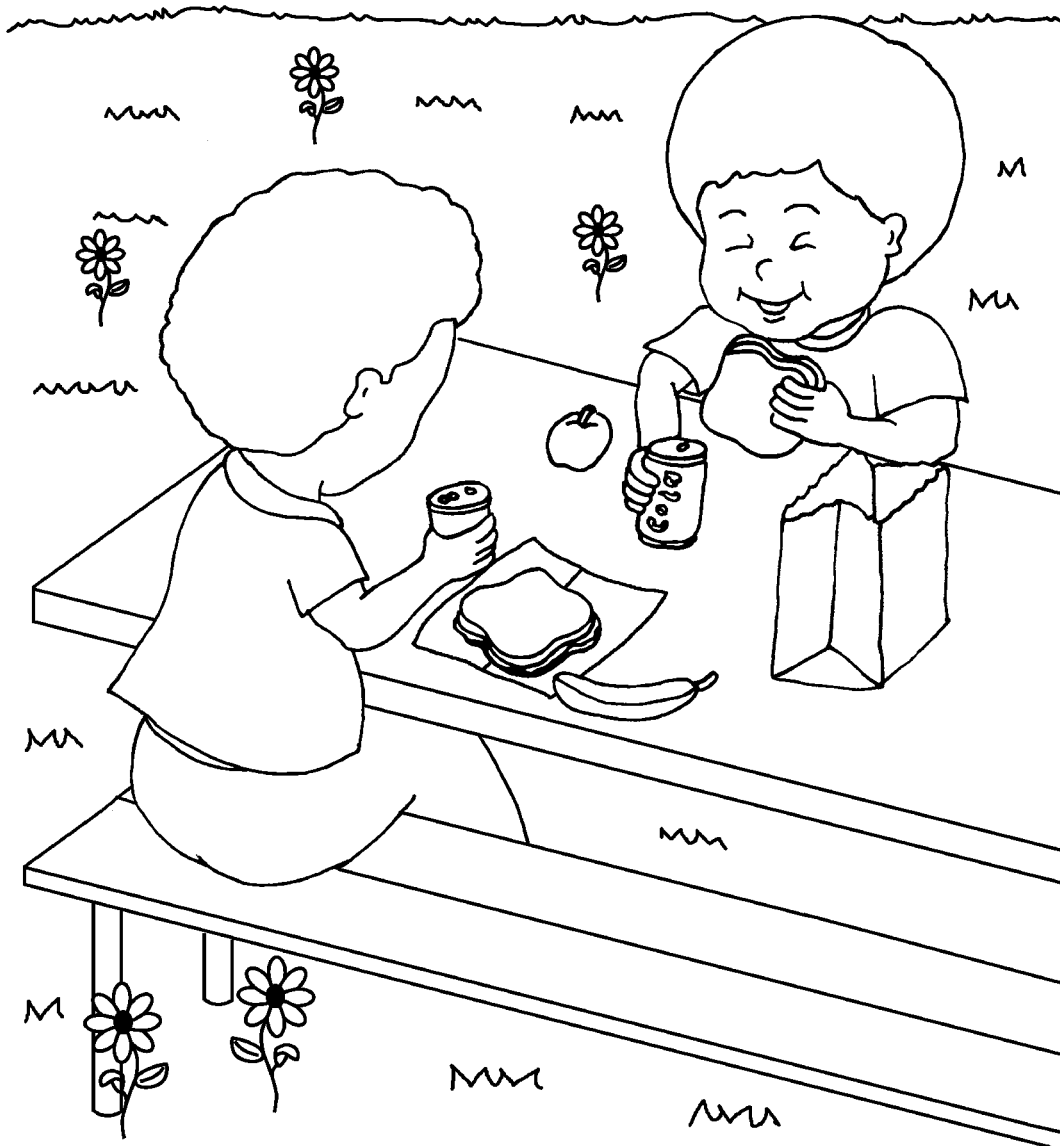
"I-I-I'm at L——incoln," said Corey.

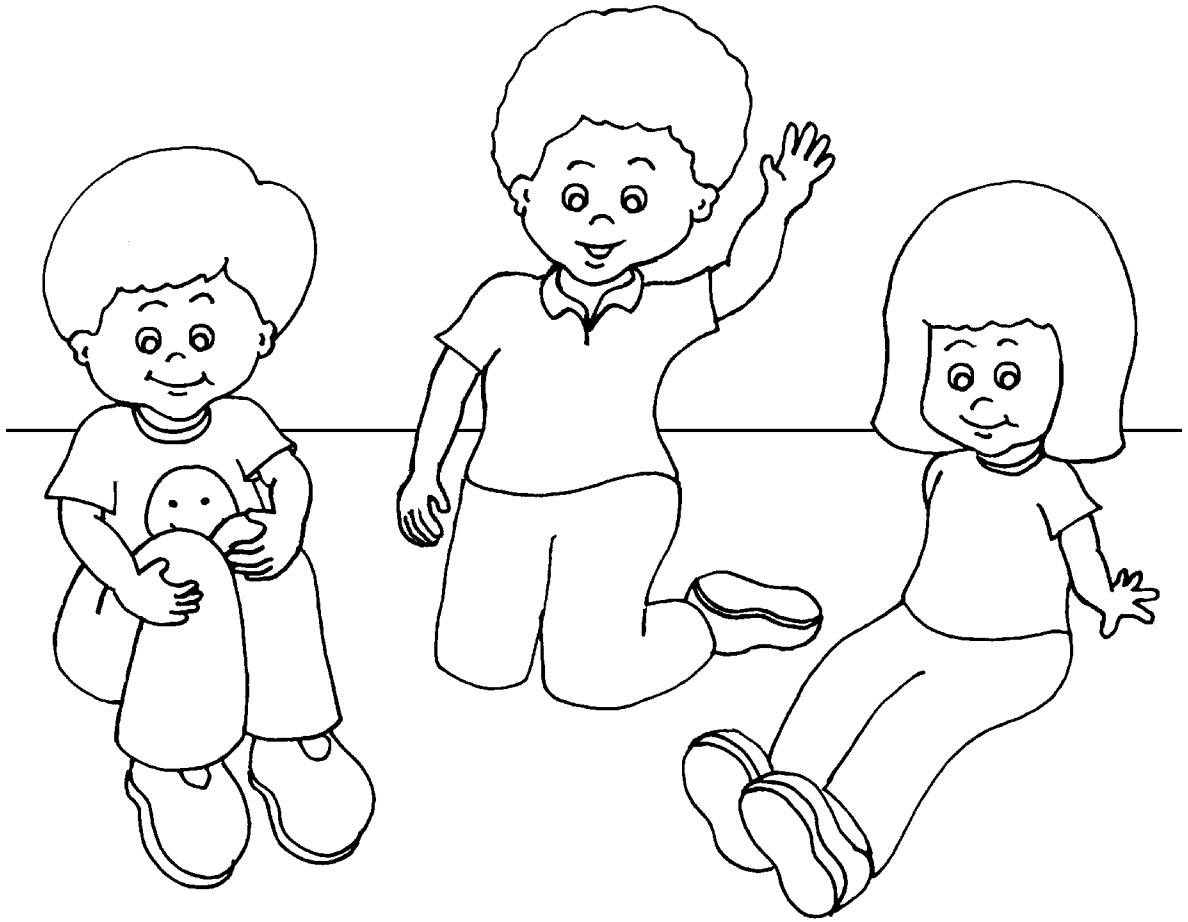
"Do you play soccer?" Jack asked.

"Yep", said Corey, "J-J-Just made the team this year. I'm new here."

"Cool." said Jack. "W-w-we'll probably play against each other some time."

Lunch ended and everyone split up into groups again. This time, as Jack name was called, he couldn't wait to get back together with the group. The time was flying and he was making all sorts of new friends.





As the kids group sat in a circle, everyone seemed so much more relaxed. What was a quiet bunch of kids who stutter had turned into a noisy bunch of kids who couldn't stop talking!

Then the kids shared stories with each other about the best and worst things about stuttering.

"No one has to share," said Linda, one of the group leaders. "Only if you want to."

Jack raised his hand. He even surprised himself that he was volunteering to talk! As they went around the circle, kids came up with lots of bad things about stuttering. But, what Jack thought was pretty cool was that they also came up with some good things. Jack had never thought about his speech that way. He wasn't bothered by it that much, but he had never tried to find some good things to say about stuttering.

"H—ey let's exchange emails or addresses or something," said Corey.

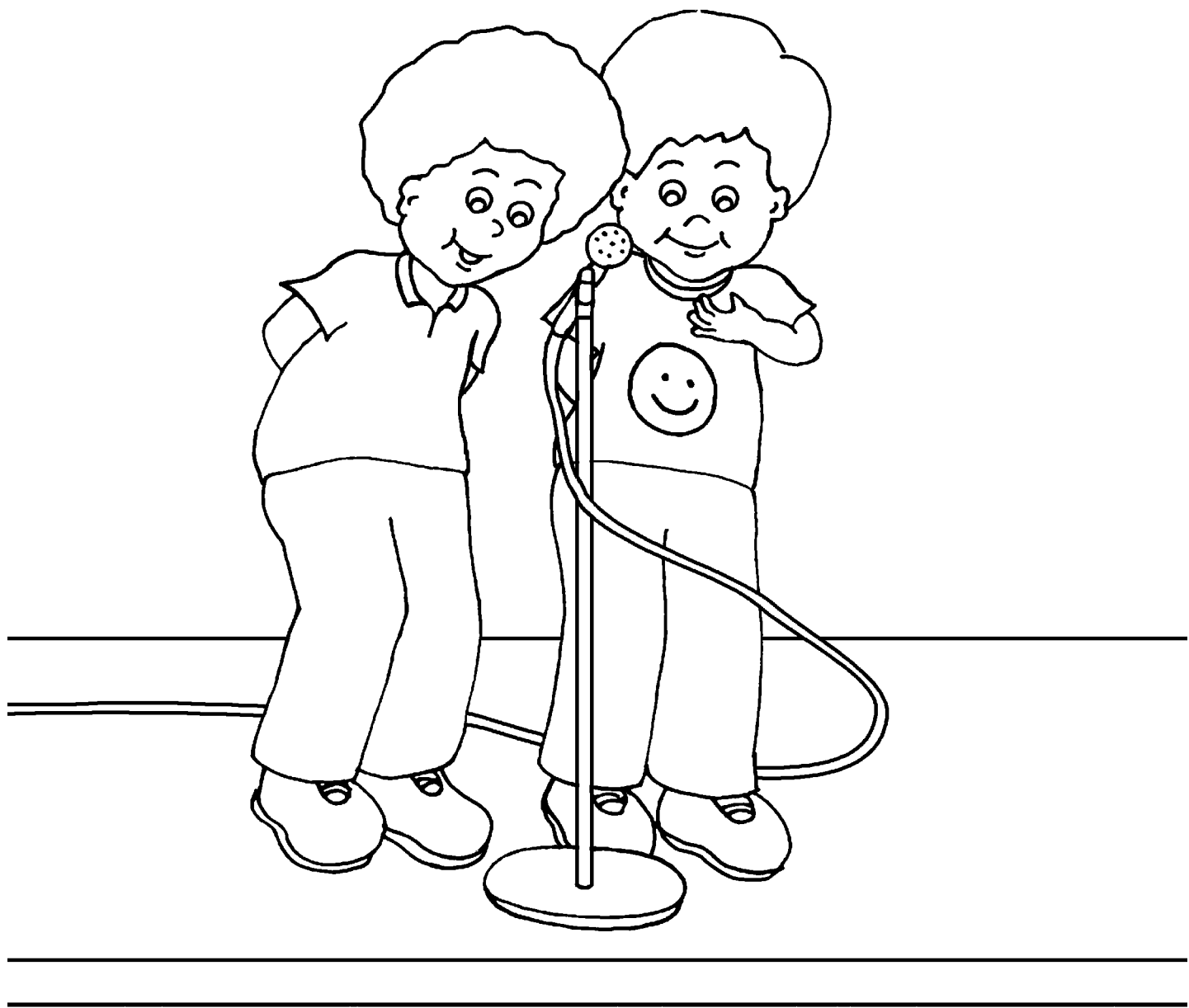
Everyone agreed. They had become kind of a "club" and they wanted to stay in touch.

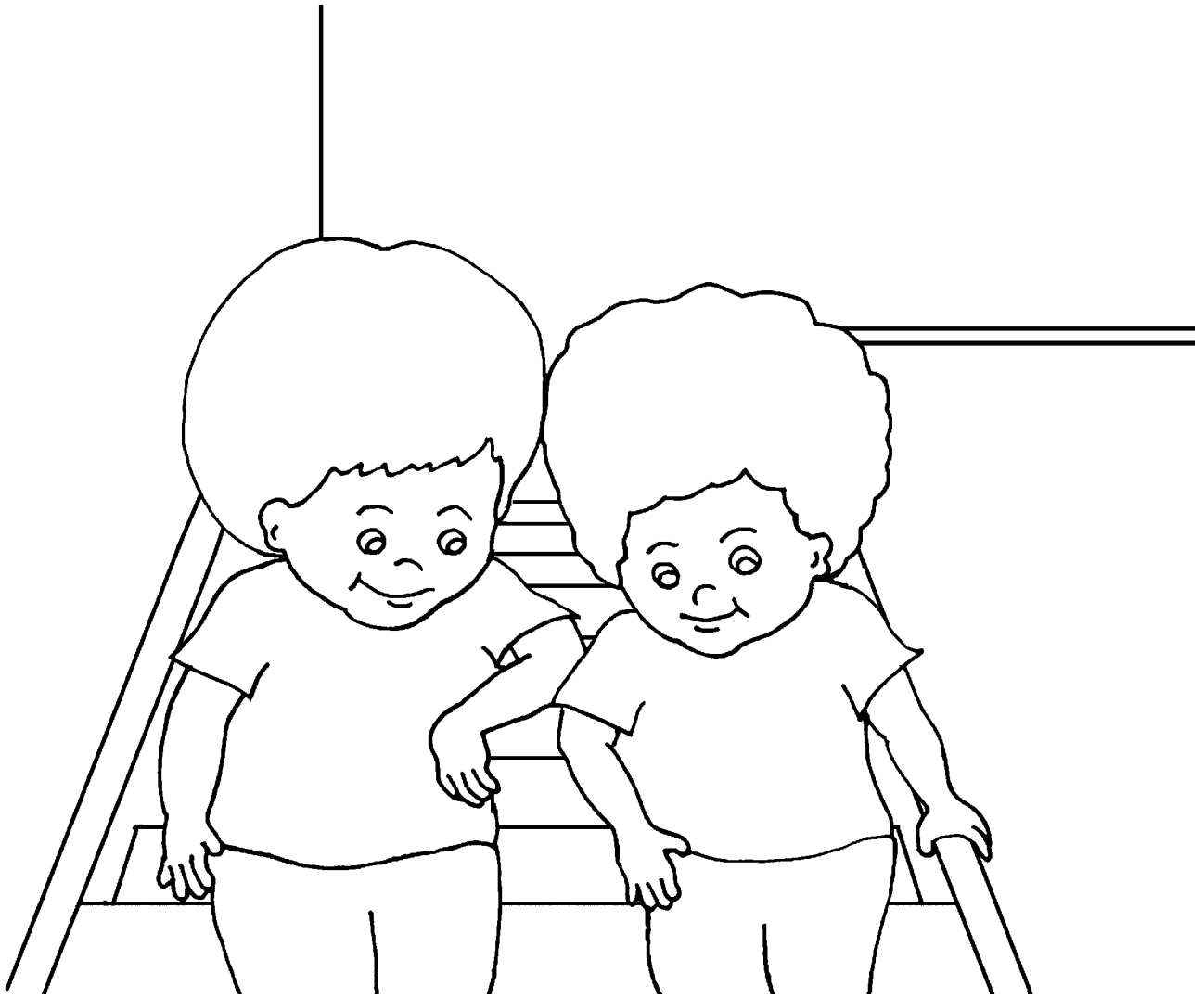


When everyone came back together from their groups for the “closing” part of the day, lots of people got up to talk about what the day was like for them. Jack didn’t want to talk. He wasn’t ready for that many people. But, Corey wanted to talk so he asked Jack to come up and stand with him.

“Th-this was really cool,” said Corey. “I didn’t want to c-c-come today, b—but my pa-pa-parents made me. N—ow I’m glad I came.”

Jack leaned into the microphone. “M—e too,” he said with a smile.





As they drove home that afternoon, Jack parents talked about what they had learned during their parent time. Jack told them stories of his day and they decided to go back the next time one of these days was held.

At home, Jack jumped out of the car and quickly got ready for the Sat night “blow-out.” When Nick, Danny and Craig came, they scarfed down pop and burgers and played video games.

When Nick and Jack went upstairs for more snacks, Nick elbowed Jack and whispered, “Hey, how was that stuttering thing today?”

“Cool,” said Jack with a shrug. “I-I-I met a kid who stutters as good as I do. You’ll meet him when we k-ick Lincoln’s team in soccer this year.”

Nick smiled, “Can’t wait!”

Jack smiled, too. “N—ow let’s go downstairs a-a-nd get to level 10 in a new game of Robo Hunter!”