

Reading task

Read the text below, written by Joe who has a stammer, and compare with your ideas.



I have a stammer, or, if you're American, a stutter. Can I just say straightaway that I wish people wouldn't assume that because I stammer I must be stupid. Stammering has absolutely nothing to do with intelligence.

People who have a stammer aren't doing it because they feel nervous, so I'd rather people didn't try and make me feel better. I really don't need them to give me advice, such as 'slow down' or 'breathe'.

Another pet hate of mine is when someone thinks they're an expert in stammering because they've seen a film where a character had a stammer. It's even more annoying when they tell me I can be cured by, for example, singing. Am I supposed to sing to people instead of talk?

I'd also really prefer people not to finish my sentence for me – especially when you get it wrong and that wasn't what I was trying to say at all. And please don't pressure me. Telling me to 'just spit it out' isn't exactly helpful either.

Finally, I'd sooner people didn't ask me what happened to me to make me stammer. Sometimes a stammer can be triggered by trauma, but most of the time there's no particular reason for it. It's just part of what makes me who I am.

I guess what I'm really saying is that I'd prefer people to focus on what I'm saying, rather than how I'm saying it.

Questions

1. What five ways of responding to stammering does Joe find unhelpful or annoying?
2. What would he prefer people to do when he's speaking?
3. Why do you think people often respond to stammering in these ways? What do you think are the best ways of helping to understand more about stammering, and how to respond when someone stammers?