A conversation about stuttering

[00:00:00] **Delphine:** Welcome back to the access to education podcast, where we talk about everything having to do with learning disabilities and learning differences, being different can be hard from physical differences to differences that aren't always seen as children. All we want is to be included and be understood by our peers.

But when you are a child and then later an adult with a speech difference or disfluency fluency can feel very isolating. People who don't take time to understand you or aren't patient enough to let you complete your thoughts can make you feel unwanted. It can feel scary and lonely today on the show I'm talking to Angie Hawking.

She's a person with a speech disfluency or stutter as she's grown up, she's learned tricks to help her speech today. She'll share her story with us. Angie, welcome to the show.

[00:00:43] **Angie:** Thank you so much. I'm so excited to be with you today.

[00:00:47] **Delphine:** Yeah, I'm excited to share your story. I think because, and I'm not sure if I already shared this with you, but I was listening to a CBC interview yesterday with an author who wrote a [00:01:00] story called. I think it's something along the lines of like, my speech is a river, I talk like a river or something and it was all about his speech disfluency and his challenges.

And it, anyway, it's a book I'm looking into getting, but it was really interesting. So it it's funny how it converges right. Topics can sometimes roll on their own.

[00:01:17] **Angie:** Yeah, That's that's awesome. I look, I look forward to it. And then, and one thing I'm going to talk about later is finding that representation is so important, right? So that's really exciting. That's great.

[00:01:28] **Delphine:** it's really great. So let's start at the beginning of your story a little bit, and this might be asking a lot. I know for me sometimes even to be able to remember far back in my life is a little challenging, but what's the earliest memory you have of struggling to speak.

[00:01:42] **Angie:** So, I, my stutter, started when I was four or five years old, I'd say, and I was thinking about this question and I think funnily enough, I don't have early memories necessarily of myself just stuttering. However, the [00:02:00] earliest memories I have are. Around people's negative reactions to my stutter.

And I think that that's notable because that's when I became really self-conscious about it. Right. Because it wasn't really a thing. I, it was a thing I had, but then it, what really affect, like what really made it a bigger thing was when I had, for instance, someone that I love and my family. You know, would like roll their eyes and be like, spit it out, you know?

And, so that's my earliest memories of just like, it's like those kinds of experiences of, having that and just, you know, to be clear, this person is by far not a horrible person, someone I deeply love. But they were uncomfortable with seeing me struggle. Right. Um, so, and, and sometimes we don't know what to do in those situations, so yeah.

I say that because maybe there's a parent or teacher out there that is like, oh my gosh, I've done that. I actually have a kid, which I'll talk about too a little bit. Like I have a kid that has a stutter as well. She's five. And, , Even [00:03:00] like, I'm sharing my story. I've been through this even I can be like, oh my God.

Like, just be, you know, like get it out. Right. It's, it's a, it does take a lot of patience. So, um, so I say that to say as much as yes, it was, it made things harder, um, to have like pressure. So I think that that's an important point. I want people to take away is to be patient and to show love and, you know, and care, for kids that are struggling with this, It's also like, understandable that like it's not, it's not everybody's thing to deal with and they don't really know how to deal with it.

And sometimes when we don't know how to deal with it, or we see someone that we love is struggling, we just want that to end, you know? And so our reaction sometimes is just harsher than we think it is. Right. , so my earliest memories. Are are around that age in all, all of the memories I have involve, you know, kind of a bad reaction from someone, about me trying to talk. and I didn't really necessarily think [00:04:00] about the way I was talking was a big issue until they pointed it out.

[00:04:04] **Delphine:** And I think as parents too, , I mean, I think of myself often. I'm just in a hurry. I need to just get the information out of you so that I can move on to whatever the next thing is. That's happening in our house and being able to give you five minutes to get a two sentence thing finished, I might just be like, I need to just, can we just move on

[00:04:21] **Angie:** Exactly.

[00:04:22] **Delphine:** I can also imagine there are probably parents and I know like my middle child had a bit of a speech delay and partially he had that because his brother would speak for him or I would speak for him. So he didn't actually need to finish, like, I'd ask him what he'd want. And before he had time to process the question and give me the answer, I'd have handed him the thing that I assumed he wanted.

So there wasn't room for him to practice what he needed to say. So,

[00:04:46] **Angie:** Yeah. yeah.

And that's kind of, I think when I was thinking about what to mention there. I think it's worth mentioning because it punctuates that the issue isn't as much about the speech. Deficiency as it is [00:05:00] about like the societal biases. Right. And like the, like the pressures or in society or in your family or whatever, about conforming to like social norms.

Right. So that's like, that's really, I think something I've realized is, you know, yes, there's this speech deficiency. Yes. I. Needed help with it and, you know, And that was all true, but also it was like the worst of it was not that the worst of it was, was people's reaction or how they might treat you or think of you, or things like that.

Or like feeling, just kind of feeling like inadequate. So I think, and I, and I do think that schools and, you know, society in general is getting better at making room. For accommodation and making room for, just kind of accessibility and acceptance of each other of different things. And that's really good, but I think that, there's a long way to go.

And it's interesting. I don't actually hear a lot about this topic. So I was like really grateful to be invited and grateful that you noticed, that I had kind of [00:06:00] commented, something on online about this and how this got going, because I think I'm sure it's out there. I'm just myself. I'm not, I'm not in these loops of, of talking about this.

So I think that this is something that isn't necessarily at the top of the list when it comes to accommodation. It's not something that a lot of folks think about. So I'm really excited to talk more about it.

[00:06:19] **Delphine:** And I wonder, and this is me totally stereotyping my thought of speech. Disfluency stutter, whatever you want to call it. But for me, I have always understood it to be more of a nervous. Anxious thing that the stutter or disfluency, it's worse when the person is in a space of anxiety, knowing that, you know, you're not a speech language pathologist or any of those things, but I would sometimes argue the person who has the thing probably is more and more knowledge of, of what's happening.

So. Is that a stereotype that we as educators, when we work with kids put on the student that they're going to stutter more, if they're anxious or does it or did in your case, did it not matter whether you were anxious? It just once [00:07:00]

[00:07:00] **Angie:** a good point. I definitely would for me again, I don't think this is something that is, I think it is very individual. I think for me, I have a stutter regardless of. anxiety or excitement, but it definitely is more intense when I'm in those situations and observing my five-year-old daughter, I would say the same is true with her, right.

So it's like when she's blocking a lot. So like one of the speech things is like what the setter is called blocking when you can, you know, like you can't quite get out of word. When she's doing that, it's because she's super excited to tell me something, you know, or, and, and I think back to my own.

I stuttered around certain people more because I was more like self-conscious around them. In fact, the person I mentioned earlier, I found that I actually, I actually unfortunately studdered more around them, which is like the person. I didn't want to set her up as many as a turn around because I just was just more self-conscious, you know, and even as an [00:08:00] adult, I find I'm not, I, as you can tell I'm I don't have a extreme stutter.

Any, any more. And I really, probably never did it, you know, it was probably a moderate at most. And now it's very mild. But even still I find myself, certain people I'm like, oh, I'm just noticing, like I have a bit more of a stutter. So it might, so it might be nerves around somebody or just performance anxiety if I'm speaking at a crowd or something like that.

So yeah, so, so I do think that there's truth to that personally, but again, like, I don't know, I'm not, I'm not an expert, so, but in my own personal experience, yes, it is. It is related to kind of excitement and anxiousness and nervousness for sure. Yeah.

[00:08:40] **Delphine:** so you've touched on this a couple of times and we've, we've talked about schools and part of what I do on the podcast is to talk about. What, and I do this partially for myself, so I can learn as an educator, but what is it that schools do you think could do, or I guess more accurately. I want to start with the question of in school.

So if you think to yourself of yourself back when you were a [00:09:00] student, did the stutter, like, did it hold you back? Did it have a negative impact on your schooling? Like what was that experience for you as someone with a speech. Impediment on school, like how did that affect

[00:09:15] **Angie:** Yeah. I, I was always a very bright kid, so I was like, you know, like I got good grades very naturally. I didn't feel like this stutter impacted me in any way in any learning, you know, sort of learning sense. But what did happen and it kind of connects to my, the way I answered the first question, because what I think about when I think about.

The school is, and, you know, we've come a long way. I'm sure that this is a very different thing now. But it was how speech, like I basically went to, so around grade one or two, I started to go to a speech therapy in class. Like while I, while I was in school. And it was the way they. It was the way they integrated or should I say lack of integration into my [00:10:00] day?

That I remember, like I was traumatizing. So what would happen? It was in the middle of a class. The teacher would say, oh, well, whatever day of the week it was, I think it was Thursday or something. She would say, okay, Angie it'stwo. You go stand by the wall. I would stand in front of the class. They would start another activity.

Cause she didn't want to meet him, start with an activity while I was going to be away soon. So I would be standing there, they'd start an activity. And I loved school. Like I was one of these like overachieving kids and excited about everything. So I would have to like be left out, standing there, like waiting for him to go to that speech therapist.

And when I, so it was just like a very embarrassing type of like, Execution of sending me to speech therapy. And I think that was the that's. What I remember about school and speech therapy is that unfortunately, in the office, it was a lot of. I again, and now I only know a little bit so of, of like a newer approach, but I've been [00:11:00] doing some speech therapy online with my own kid.

Cause she's, she's in speech therapy. Right. So I see how that person has been. Taken such an amazing approach, as opposed to what I had. I just kind of sat in an office, practicing sounds with my mouth, and then I got a lollipop at the end, you know? So, um, and, and, you know, and then there's probably some, some validity to practicing sounds with your mouth.

I'm not saying that that was like off base, but it, it wasn't about. Talking about any bigger picture around, like, how do you, you know, like what kind of situations I would send that I was experiencing, it was just like, come in and go, you know, and just like, make sounds with your mouth for 20 minutes and get a lollipop and go.

And so it was just not an experience that I felt like I was getting much from. And. Like I said the most extreme part of it was just the embarrassment. Like I would be nervous for the whole day before, you know, like, oh my gosh, like speech classes coming. And, and then the process of getting into getting into it and [00:12:00] coming out and like, you know, I'm sure it's hard to figure out in the day how to make this stuff work, but I'm sure even if it was towards the end of the class where I wouldn't have to come in or, you know, I'm sure that there would, there could have been a better way.

Of accommodating and making sure I wasn't, I wasn't. So, you know, I wasn't so obvious or whatever. So yeah, so that's, so that's my memories of, of speech, unfortunately kind of intervention in school. I don't remember teachers ever being, , necessarily, you know, It was a neutral experience. I mean, I think that they were a bit frustrated with me sometimes if I, because I was always wanting to answer question, but I would struggle.

And I think, you know, I think of my quote, nice teachers that I can remember. I think they were nice because I could tell that they were patient and loving, right? Like they, they, they just kind of gave me the space that I needed. And then I think of some that were just like, whoa, kind of rolling their eyes. you?

know, the rolling of the eyes is something that you get, as a kid with a stutter, unfortunately, but, , , I think, I think that, that, you know, from a school perspective, that [00:13:00] was my experience. And then after grade five, there was no more intervention. So a lot of my memories dealing with my stutter were old, like after grade five.

And, you know, so as a, an older, and also a younger kid, but there was no more like intervention, like that was it. So anyway, so that's, that's what I can remember about that.

[00:13:19] **Delphine:** and the integration of like how support is provided is a tough one, right? Like I've certainly been that teacher that has a student who's being taken out for occupational therapy, for example, because they need help with their handwriting and, and kind of scheduling out the, when does it happen and how best you make the transition without kind of.

To your point of interrupting the child from that activity. But sometimes it happens part way through and that's kind of what it needs to be. So that is

[00:13:44] **Angie:** And, and yet as an adult, like, I remember being so traumatized and as an adult, of course, I see it in that way. I'm like, okay. They probably just didn't have any other option. Maybe they only have the speech teacher on, on site for a couple hours a day or something. Right. There's so many things that could have been the reason.

But I [00:14:00] just, yeah, but I still think it's like valid to be like, okay. But. Or even like some level of consulting with me would have been nice, you know, like, Hey, cause I was a very reasonable, smart kid, so it wouldn't have been like, Hey, here's your two options. You know, maybe there were two options and it was this or this.

Like, you know, if, if it just felt like I had no control, I was so embarrassed, you know? And it was like, there probably was a better, some, some level of a better way. To accommodate that. I don't know if there was like an after-school option or not, you know, there was nothing, there was nothing else ever offered.

so that's, that's just something that sticks out to me and I know that it there's limitations of course. But it definitely, yeah.

You know, it's, it's like, what, what it's it's what are the things that left a big sting? You know, that's like, that's what I'm thinking about it from now.

And that's the, one of the things that left the thing. Right. So, Yeah.

[00:14:48] **Delphine:** And I think that that. Makes sense in terms of your memory would be stuck on the thing that made you feel uncomfortable in a moment when you already feel different

[00:14:56] **Angie:** Exactly.

[00:14:57] **Delphine:** not like your peers. And then [00:15:00] they, the teacher, has you stand at the other end of the room and wait for say five, even 10 minutes for the person to come and get you.

Cause they're not coming right then. So all of those things kind of get factored into it. . So what about, I mean, you touched on it really briefly, so let's talk about it. What happened, you know, so in grade five you don't have any more support. Gosh, I remember high school and it was , you know, Wolf eat Wolf in terms of social structures and , making friends and getting along with people.

And , if you're not wearing the right jeans, you can't fit in with that group. , listen, every high school is a little different, so not every high school is that. Kind of connected, but there would have been a sense in high school when, you know, we become, as people, we become very conscious of how we look and what we say and what we do.

So how did that following experience through school? So I'm even thinking like university, I mean, I'm thinking of when I had to stand up and present my thesis. I don't, I mean, that was, that was a pretty nerve wracking experience for me. So, um, what was your experience going forward?

[00:15:57] **Angie:** Yeah. So I basically just [00:16:00] an and especially, probably since I didn't have the best speech therapy experience anyways, like I didn't feel like it had helped all that much. Maybe it did to be fair. Right? Like maybe there was some help, but my experience was so tainted with like how, how it was executed.

That I don't think, I felt like there was a lot of help. I think what I, what I started to do was just find my own way. Of coping, you know, of like teaching myself, like we, I mean, this makes me sound like a, like a dinosaur, but you know, YouTube probably like we didn't have the internet, you know? So like there was no way of like finding, a lot of information, you know, or finding other people, dealing with something.

So I kind of just made my own, I taught myself just how, just how to cope with the stutter. So me and my little tips and tricks for myself and I didn't necessarily do it super consciously like this, but now looking back, I realized that's what I did, is I have found, and it's funny because I was a kid that was drawn.

Of course I had a stutter and also drawn to like, [00:17:00] drama, like doing these like things on stage. Cause I thought they were super fun and like, it was just a kid that was drawn to that stuff. So I, so to be able to participate. So in those kinds of things, I had to figure it out, right.

It was either like, I'm not going to be able to do this stuff, or I'm going to find a way that I can get through it and do it. Cause I think it's super fun.

You know, they, they were so personal to me until more recently I realized when I share about them, you know, they're, they're probably more universal than I think. , they're probably even, perhaps even like there, there are things that speech therapists teach, you know, I'm not sure. So I've made my own kind of version of like what I have done too.

To be able to speak, you know, confidently, from myself and that's so, so that's basically what I did even before grade five, even while I was still kind of just like hoping I'm like, if I'm going to be a social kid and into social things, I'm going to just have to figure this out. It's just something that's part of me.

And so I, you know, thankfully I think a lot of it has to [00:18:00] do with, I did have a mom that was just so accepting of it all, you know, like there were, I never felt. Uh, singled out. She never said, oh, you can't, you know, she never pulled me aside and, and said something like, you know, because of your stutter, you might want to think of something different, like to be excited about.

I think that would have really crushed me to be honest. And I think that that would have had a really negative effect and I never got that. It was like, do you want to do it? That's great. You know? And, , and she just kind of let me do my thing, even though now as a mom, I would know like how hard that is inside to be like, oh my gosh, what if my kid is gonna.

Be embarrassed or whatever. Like I'm sure that that was not easy for her. To let me to, to see that it's going to be more vulnerable for me to do this than other kids, but she left, she let it happen, you know? and I think that that was, and she was supportive, you know, like super supportive and super loving about it all.

And I never felt like if I started in front of her, there was any judgment. There was, she was always patient. Right. So I think that that [00:19:00] was probably a big reason that I. Just decide. Okay. I'm going to live my life and I'm going to find my own way to do this kind of thing, you know?

[00:19:09] **Delphine:** and I think that's kind of the role of a parent. For those parents who are listening, who have, kids who are struggling, it is hard to. Watch them struggle, but there is a little bit of like we, as parents do have to step back a little bit and I've certainly watched it with my own kids where I want to step in right away.

But I have to kind of sit on my hands and go, Nope, they need to kind of figure out their way, but I still need to support them. So they're going to fall down. They're going to make a mistake, whatever, but I'm still there to support them and love them, which I think is great. So let's talk about your parents for a little bit, because parents are an integral role of, of kids' lives, especially when they're struggling in school.

Whether it's just general struggles because maybe they don't like school or they don't like the teacher that year. And so school is hard or whether they have a kid with a learning disability or a learning challenge. What is something that you feel your parents did really well to support you in sort of quote, unquote, overcoming your stutter?

Is there something that [00:20:00] they did that for you really is that pivotal thing of like, yeah. That was the right way to handle that or do deal with it? Yes.

[00:20:07] **Angie:** I mean, I think I might've kind of answered it already, basically. Like I think my mom just, I, so I grew up with a single mom for a chunk of my childhood, from like age 5 to 10or so. , and I did see my, my, my dad and, still have a good relationship with him. And I also now have a stepdad, so there other parents in the mix.

But when I think about kind of the period of time that I was, you know, dealing with this the most, it was me and my mom. So that's why I'm speaking of specifically my mom. Um, but yeah, I mean, she was like, I was just saying like, she was just. Really loving about it all. And I could tell, you know, you know, kids are intuitive, right?

Kids, kids like pick up on stuff with their parents, even when their parents think that they're hiding things. So, um, so I could tell it, I could tell them, I knew my mom cared deeply for me. And I knew my mom wanted [00:21:00] me to have it easy, as easy as possible. Right. But I bet at the same. So I knew that it kind of.

That she was struggling with how to respond, you know, to my stutter, and how much, you know, to talk about or not talk about it. But all that said, I also could tell, she just kind of let me be me and just was like, I'm just going to be here to. To support her, you know, like cheer her on basically. And when, speech therapy was offered through the school, she said, absolutely let's do it.

You know? So it wasn't. So, for sure, she found as many accommodations that she could and help that she could. But at the same time, you know, I think she just, like I said, like, you know, I wanted to do drama. She didn't say, you know, maybe you should pick something different. Like, you know, that would have, like I said, crushed me, so she didn't, there was nothing, there was none of that.

It was just a lot of support. And encouragement and patients when I was having in a day, they're nervous or excited, and I had a, uh, uh, a more rough day, like I had, I do re I remember being a kid and [00:22:00] having days that were just expects, like extra rough, you know, and being like, is this what every day is going to be like, You know, every, every sentence being a struggle.

But it wasn't, you know, you'd have it, maybe sometimes you'd have a few rough days in a row or a couple of rough weeks in a row, but there was like an ebbs and flows to it. I'm sure that I, I'm not the only person that probably experiences that. I see that in my own daughter as well. Where, you know, sometimes we just go through a season where it's like, okay, is a few weeks here that it's really rough and hard for her to speak.

And then other times it's like almost gone, you know? So. So anyways, but my mom didn't seem to just, she at least didn't show her anxiety about it very much. She supported me, let me do my thing. We didn't talk about it too much, but at the same time, I didn't feel like I couldn't talk about it.

Right. Like there was a safe space about it, but it wasn't like, it was a topic of conversation all the time. So I think like, it was, it was just a nice, comfortable space that I, that was created with her. That was really, that was really [00:23:00] helpful. Yeah.

[00:23:00] **Delphine:** So, if you think about yourself as an adult now, when we're adults, I think we want to put on the vision or seem like, we've got it all put together and nothing gets us down or nothing upsets us or anything. But I wonder about, how you are now as an adult and how stuttering or speech disfluency has affected you as an adult.

[00:23:24] **Angie:** Yeah, so I still, I still have a stutter. But like I was saying before, it's, it's a mild stutter. Some people don't even notice I have a stutter and they're friends with me for a long time and they don't even think of me as someone with a stutter, which is so interesting to me. Cause that was never my story as a kid.

Right. It was like, oh, I'm the kid with the stutter kind of thing. So how, how does it, how does it affect me as an adult? So it is still a hurdle for me sometimes, depending on, in, in my work, I do a lot of teaching, speaking in front of groups or, you know, rooms of [00:24:00] people or whatever, when there's not COVID going on.

It is still a thing that affects me on the daily, I would say, but because of the coping of the kind of ways I've learned to live my life and like kind of built, I think it's been a really good character builder because I've really good. I just have to find a way to cope and, uh, and deal with this and find my own tips and tricks.

That it's just part of life now, you know, like, I don't feel like it's a major deficiency. I feel like it's something that I can wear with a bit of a badge of honor, you know what I mean? Like, Hey, I'm doing my thing and I also have this thing, you know, like, it's just like, it just feels like a part of me in a way that I can be proud of actually.

And I it's, it's like, I wish my, my, my, you know, 10 year old or. Eight year old self could hear me say that because it's such a, you know, it was so hard to deal with it as a kid, you know, it was like really,[00:25:00] it was, it was really isolating sometimes and embarrassing, but now that I can view it in a different way, it's just, it's such an empowering thing, right.

To be able to be like, I have this thing and I can share. My experience with other kids and other people now. And I can, I, and I can do my thing and people can just watch me do my thing and they can be like, oh, she's got a stutter, but she's still doing her thing. Right. I think that in itself is hopefully inspiring.

It's inspiring for me. And it's hopefully inspiring for other people. And yeah,

[00:25:33] **Delphine:** .

Brought me to you in terms of, I noticed a post that you had replied to and someone asking about sort of supporting their child. Who's very young. I mean, only in grade one or grade two, I think, and looking for, you know, it was kind of some suggestions as a parents of like how to help.

And what I loved about your reply was I'm an adult now who still stutters and I've been there and I've done that. This isn't a thing that is going to be,[00:26:00] life-changing or, destroy their life or their capabilities or, or whatever. Like it was your spin on. It was super positive and gentle in the way in which.

You provided support, which is how I kind of was like, oh, can we do a podcast to, because I think you're right. We don't talk about stuttering a lot. It's one of those invisible disabilities that we don't talk about. And I think what either happens is people don't speak up because they stutter. So they just don't really want to talk or the way in which other people around them might.

Deal with it by rolling their eyes, telling them to spit it out, all of those things. And so what I love about everything that you've said is really just about being empathetic and, and impassioned towards the person you're with and giving them the time and space.

[00:26:44] **Angie:** totally.

[00:26:45] **Delphine:** So speaking of parents and support, are there any suggestions or pieces of advice you could give to parents who are listening today? What piece of advice you have for them?

[00:26:54] **Angie:** So, yeah, I was thinking if it's helpful, I'll go through a few of my own kind of [00:27:00] like tips I've realized that I had for myself. And it's funny because yeah, I, I, this has been a really good exercise for me because, I didn't really even realize it's not like this is a list I made like 10 years ago.

Like, I didn't even realize I had these kinds of, I was holding these like coping mechanisms. Until in fact I made that, yeah, I responded to that parent and I was like, Hey, you know, I just kind of some things that I do. And then when, when you and I talked I'm like, I should remember what I said there, because there is some, , like some helpful things and I just realized, it's been a really good experience to be, I'm really grateful for this for, for you inviting me.

Because it's also helped me start to articulate it too. Articulate who I am, what I do to kind of do my thing. And, and I think in the more we can articulate our own deficiencies and how we cope with those things, the more we can help other people. So I'm really grateful for that experience, as well.

So, yeah, so I have, I think six quick ones, that I've [00:28:00] written down. So my first one, , I. I learned new words for frequently used words that I tended to say when I was excited or wound up or that I wanted to say, and this is something I remember doing as early as I can remember, like trying to cope because I was in these situations, like if you're with friends and you wanted to say a word, and so I would like spend time in my room thinking about, if tomorrow, Susie says.

Something. And I want to be like, that's so funny, but funny is a little tricky of a word for me. I could be like, what, what, what could I say? Right? Like I would have like these, these moments of coaching myself outside of the spaces that the intensity was happening. So for instance, for that one, I, and I still tend to say this word a lot.

I say that's hilarious because hilarious is easy for me to say, right. So I remember like doing these little exercises myself, When I was, it was all in my head. I don't, I don't think I have a wrote, wrote it out or anything. Maybe that would be [00:29:00] helpful. So, so maybe somebody could try that, but, but I just did it in my head by myself, you know, after school and in my bedroom thinking like, okay, if this happens and I want to say that so funny, I'll say that's hilarious, you know?

And, and it's still, and it's my way of still like, Finding my voice, being able to participate, being able to say something, because the last thing you want to do as a kid to feel like they can't say anything when they want to talk, you know, like that's first, especially for a social kid like me, like that would have been awful.

So this was my way of like, I think coaching myself, like I said, to, to find a way to be able to pursue to part participate still. . So my second one is, , I have words that help get me going well. And then I have words that trip me up. So what I've learned to do, and this is, again, something I've done for a very long time, and I still do this trick literally every day is I use the easier words that I, I, that I can say without a problem [00:30:00] before a hard word.

So if I know, I have to say, so for instance, in the setting I work in at work. I have to make announcements every day in front of a large group of people, like a big room of people. And if I'm talking about the Monday coming up, I'll do exactly what I just said.

I'll say the Monday coming up, as opposed to an Mo Monday, we have. You know, a clinic or whatever, I'll say on the Monday coming up, we have a clinic because on the Monday coming up, it's super easy for me to say, but if I know the word Monday is a tricky word for me to just say right out of the gate. I don't start a sentence with an M word.

Just don't do it. And these aren't even things I realize I have done been doing for many years, but I just have learned, okay. You know, if I want to say this thing, or if I want to call a friend's name like that, that was something I thought of like I did at a young age. Right. Okay. I have a friend that has a hard name for me to say, I'm going to try to work it into a sentence as opposed to start the sentence with their name.

[00:31:00] Right. So, so anyways, I'm getting a little technical, but hopefully if someone's listening that has a kid that is, has a stutter, like, you know, these are the things that I realized I do. , with my own. And, and again, like, I like the example I just gave is not from childhood that's from like, you know, like recently this is the stuff I still do to make sure I can say what I want to say.

Just find a slightly different way to say it. my third one, , so it was around kind of like once we get older and we have to make presentations, I actually found it was a gift when you could. Make a presentation and write it out because then you have complete control over how you're saying and what you're saying.

There might be some sense, like if you're, if you're doing a presentation on a thing and the word itself is a hard thing to say, for sure, you have to find. You might have to say it like you can't avoid all words, but, that next trick I just talked about, you know, you would find an entry word to help you say that word.

So I say this because again, I'm, I was thinking about the audience [00:32:00] and, , maybe if there's an older kid listening or whatever, I think at first, when I started to make presentations, I was like, oh my gosh, I am going to be awful at this. Like, this is going to be this, this horrible me speaking in front of students.

But once I realized actually me making your presentation means I have control of what I'm going to say. It actually turned into a thing I could do really well. Like if, if anything, I was like my top thing that I could do really well because I had more control. Over how I was going to say the thing and yes, I still stuttered.

It wasn't like, it was all smooth and perfect. Of course I still stuttered, but it was, there was just like feeling like I had yeah. That control and, was able to say things that I wanted to say perhaps in a slightly different way, which is very empowering. Right. So that's my next thing. So I've got three more.

So one that you've already mentioned was just. Stressed, like for sure. Tense, tense, tension, anxiety, excitement, [00:33:00] like those are all situations, at least for me, and probably for lots of other kids, that always made things harder to talk. So what I do now and what I learned to do, especially when I was in plays and stuff in high school is I would take a lot of deep breaths when I could, you know, and I would, I would even like, even now, like before I preach, I work at a church.

So before I preach, I like. And taking deep breaths and I'm like moving my mouth. I know no one can see my mouth except for you. But I'm like, I'm going like that in my mouth. all crazy. And, uh, and it just I've learned these things. This is what helps, you know, like it makes it loosens me up. So finding ways to loosen that you're comfortable with losing loosening yourself up, speaking slower, like that's something that was always said to me as a kid.

And I'm like, oh, stop saying that it's so annoying. You know? So. That was something I couldn't really do until I was older, is speak slower and kind of find the value in it. So in case there's a kid, that's like, oh God, please don't tell me to speak slower. Again. Everybody says that it is true though.

Speaking [00:34:00] slower, it just makes it easier. Right. It just kind of brings your brain. You're brain your mouth to the same level. Um, so that's so, so just kind of finding ways to relax have been a really, helpful thing. , one thing my daughter does, so my next one is actually around a trick that I think she does really awesome.

She's being awesome with. Uh, so again, she's five and she has a stutter. One thing she does is she uses her. But her body all the time to like, kind of get words out. So I know, again, I know only you can see me and no one else, but what she does is she'll kind of, if she's having a hard time getting a word out, she'll kind of walk, you know, like if she's standing and talking to me, she'll like, Take a couple of steps in the movement and sometimes she'll kind of stomp her foot, um, like the movement kinda just helps her get the word out.

And so I've told her like, Hey, like great job, like using your body, you know? And, uh, and I think that that's a really good, cool little trick that she's taught herself because [00:35:00] nobody taught her that, like nobody said that in speech, I didn't teach her that. So I think like, you know, for perhaps a more active kid, like that's a really good little trick, , and then my last one that I could remember, this is when I was older and I was doing plays and, you know, speaking and things, I would kind of, if it, so this is in the situation where there was no getting out of saying a phrase exactly.

As it is said, like I couldn't rewrite it or I couldn't like add words to, you know, so this is in, in those situations, I find I can kind of, , I kind of like S almost sing a word or two, it doesn't sh it doesn't come out. It doesn't sound like I'm doing that. I don't think to most people, but I would do that in plays when I could not change any of the words.

It did not have that freedom to alter. Any of the words is I would practice the line and I would practice it in different tones or like saying different words throughout the sentence, with a different tone to kind of like, [00:36:00] again, kind of help me into the word a little bit, without. Again, being able to use a different word to T to do that.

So that's just a few of the tips I realized I've done my whole life to kind of compensate for this and kind of live. You know, happy life of like, engaging with the things I want to do still. , but, , but also realizing like, this is part of who I am, absolutely speech therapy. Like I think it's come so far.

So, , by no means do I, do I want anyone to think I'm not like super pro going to speech therapy and it gets really, really good. The things I've seen. My daughter. be able to do in it, even at age four before she was five was awesome. . So I think that speech therapy is just amazing and that there's really great.

knowledge that they have now that can help kids.

And then I guess the other thing though, is like it's true that a speech impediment might never go away completely. So just to kind of find ways to, for the kid to celebrate who they are still [00:37:00] be, who they are, have confidence be able to do, this certain job, or I want to do this thing, but I can't because of my stutter.

I mean, that would have been, horrible for a kid like me to like be told I can't do something because of my stutter. So I think you just like embrace it, you know, you embrace it and you find ways to just like, this is a part of me and I'm going to find ways to do my best.

And, and then the other thing is like, Maybe, I don't think this is something that you can put on a kid. But I think as people become adults and they have this kind of thing, you can say, you know, your job in part is to, is to talk about it, right. Is to start to normalize it, to educate people. Like what I'm doing now is like, I would have never done it would have been mortified to talk about it as a kid, to be honest.

And maybe, you know, some kids are feeling, feeling like they could do it. And that's amazing if they can. Personally, I would have struggled with that. It was like, I would never would have wanted to kind of be on stage, like being an advocate for it. But as an adult, I can be. [00:38:00] Right. So, however, wherever people are at with that, if they can be an advocate as a kid, that's amazing if they can't that's okay, too.

Right. If they're not feeling that's the job they want to play, that's fine. But just kind of look towards yeah. Look towards people that are having, you know, like there's a lot of. There's thousands. There's probably millions of us, right? Hundreds of thousands of us out there that have setters that are doing our thing.

Right. So just know that there's, um, that there's adults that had a hard time with it, but they've made it through and they've found ways in trip and in their own tips and tricks, and that every kid can find their own as Well,

[00:38:39] **Delphine:** Well, I mean, remember Joe Biden has a stutter.

[00:38:44] **Angie:** I know. So cool.

[00:38:45] **Delphine:** president of United States and, , her name is escaping me right now. I'm the one who did the big speech at his inauguration, , has a speech impediment as well. So, there's just so many people [00:39:00] that are there and the conversation is starting.

And I think you're right. It's really important to start the conversation. And I talk often, I mean, with my own kids, right? I, we talk a lot about what their difference is and how they need to own it and be proud of what it is because all of these differences come with gifts. They're just a little bit different.

They're not wrapped in the same package. That's all

[00:39:20] **Angie:** Yeah, totally. Yeah.

[00:39:24] **Delphine:** of the suggestions, every one of those suggestions, I love them. They're so great. And they're, you know, they're little tiny things that, for me, as I listened, I'm like, oh, well, that's pretty easy to do, but I could see how it would become an unconscious thing to just start to do it as you go that you wouldn't necessarily

[00:39:40] **Angie:** exactly. Yeah.

[00:39:41] **Delphine:** . So just really quickly before we finish, I'm wondering about any advice you might have for teachers. I mean, we've talked a little bit about parents. But what about teachers in the classroom? If they have kids who are struggling to talk, is there something that you, I mean, you're a mom of, of a school aged child.

So I mean, we're, daughter's teacher, we're listening and you know, maybe they're doing all of this already, but [00:40:00] what are some of the things that you would really recommend the teachers do?

[00:40:03] **Angie:** I think the obvious stuff is like, of course be patient like make space for somebody if they're raising their hand and they're having a harder time. But I. Just as important, if not more, in my opinion is like representation matters so much. Right. So if you're showing videos, you know, like make an effort to find somebody that has a bit of a stutter that does something, I know that this can be harder, so maybe it's not always possible, but, but there are people, you know, like I, like, I was going to mention Joe Biden to like it, or even just like talking about, , bringing this kind of stuff to light, talking about people's.

Talking about a speech impediment a couple of times a year. Like somebody like Joe Biden, if you know, you have a kid in the class or two that has this kind of thing going on. I think that's something that I did not have as a kid, is anyone either in my life or I had like my impression of.

People that did amazing things in the world were like, no one has a speech [00:41:00] impediment, you know, like no one has any problems like I do. Thankfully for the internet, we can know that that's not true and kids can find that information easier. So, yeah, so like looking up and Joe, Joe Biden had invited that that kid that had made that video.

So he was quite young. I think he was like eight or 10 or maybe 12. I don't know, but he was quite young and he had made a video just saying how Joe had been so inspirational for him. And then Joe Biden invited him, I think, to read a poem or something, or I don't know. He did, he did some sort of speaking thing, which is so cool.

There are like multiple, I would just like Googling this because of this. There's like a lot of famous people that are actors that are, they have a stutter. It's incredible to me. Emily blunt, Samuel L. Jackson, Nicole Kidman. If you just Google it, there's like all this information.

So again like that would have been like so exciting for me to know as a kid. So I think finding ways of like that dwelling on it at all times, but you know, like once or twice throughout the year or something, [00:42:00] finding, finding ways of, of making, just like making it kind of, kind of normalizing it, I guess, you know, and just kind of like, kind of like making sure that that kid.

Doesn't feel like there's no one else out there that has this issue. If there's nobody else in the class and maybe there's nobody in their family that has, you know, like maybe they, cause they might feel like that. That's how I felt as a kid for the longest time. , it wasn't until I was an adult, I started to see people.

That had a stutter and they did their thing and it's like, well, that's cool. You know? But, um, so I think like the younger, the younger, you can do that the better, so finding ways of showing that I think in class will, will go a long way. And you know, and of course, like the obvious, like from what I'm from my story, working with the speech therapist on like, what, what does it look like to do this in a way that, that kid and some kids aren't going to be uncomfortable?

Some kids are so like, realizing like. You know, this kid needs a different approach than the last kid with this. And, and just making sure like, yeah, it's not, it's not something that any kid [00:43:00] has to be ashamed of. , it's, it's a really archaic thought to think that stuttering equals. Any sort of like, you know, mental deficiency or anything, but sadly that's still, I think it's still like a thing that's held out there in the world.

I mean, I see it even, even in my own interactions with people, I can see it sometimes if I trip up, I can see somebody just kind of disengage with me a little bit. I'm like, what was that? You know? It doesn't happen often, thankfully, but it does happen still. So I think just, you know, finding ways that you can normalize it and make sure that that a student knows that you don't think that they have any sort of mental deficiency that's connected to their speech impediment. If that makes sense. I don't know if I'm saying that exactly well, but, but I think that that was, that was always a worry of mine, I think, is like, people are going to think I'm so stupid because I can't say something perfectly.

[00:43:57] **Delphine:** Well, I was just going to say, I think that that's a [00:44:00] really great point because even. You know, in my own disability with reading and writing, I found ways to kind of overcome those things. And so I would do it in a different way, which might look different and sound different, but I was still the end outcome was still there.

So I think it's just recognizing that every child is different and every child has a different strength and a different thing that they're maybe not so good at. And you have to just look for the gift that that child has or the thing that they're really good at and build on that. Right. So,

[00:44:29] **Angie:** Yeah.

[00:44:29] **Delphine:** and being different is hard, right?

I mean, it's just, it's not fun. So anywhere within education where we can put the emphasis on the good part of being different, rather than on the negative part of the, you're not smart enough, you're not good enough. You shouldn't be in your class. You can't be in the drama group group because you stutter.

I mean, none of those things were true. You absolutely can be. It's just a case of thinking of it in a different way. So I think those are really great reminders. Angie, thank you so much for coming on the show today. It was such a pleasure to chat with you, to [00:45:00] talk with you, and there's so much value in what you have to offer in this.

So thank you so much.

[00:45:04] **Angie:** Thank you so much for having me.