

A CASE OF STUTTERING TREATED SUCCESSFULLY WITH AVERSIVE NOISE TECHNIQUE

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Mr B., a 19 year old boy, reported to the Institute with a complaint of stuttering. He was studying for his bachelor's degree in education. He could not give precise information on the time of onset of his problem. However, he felt that he probably started having problems with his speech when he was about 8 years old. His difficulty had remained almost the same over these years.

The severity of his stuttering was judged to be moderate, without many prominent secondary symptoms. However, he did exhibit slight tremors of the lips and a frying of his voice during normal conversation. Outstanding symptoms were hesitations and repetitions.

The ENT examination was negative and he had a normal hearing. He was then administered the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI) to measure the extent of generalized neurotic tendencies. His score on the scale of Neuroticism, however, was within the normal limits. The EPI also revealed tendencies towards introversion. The boy came from a middle class family, his father being an agriculturist. He was the oldest son in the family and had a younger brother. There was no family history of speech and/or hearing problems.

The case was recommended behaviour therapy with aversive noise. The therapy was started on 16-10-1969. To deliver the aversive noise an apparatus specially devised for this was used. The apparatus, with the help of a battery eliminator and a pair of headphones made it possible to deliver sharp click-like noise to the ears of the subject. The intensity of the noise could be varied from 78 dB to 124 dB. The therapist could operate the control switch to deliver the noise. The case was seen daily. Each therapy session lasted 25 minutes. During the therapy sessions the case was made to sit comfortably and was asked to wear the headphones. He was then given a long passage in English to read aloud. Whenever he stuttered while reading, the therapist pressed his control switch. Thus the case was presented with aversive noise every time he stuttered. The therapist also noted down the number of blocks during each therapy session. He was seen for a total number of 60 sessions. During the first week of therapy the case stuttered on an average of 156 words in each session. The progressive reduction in the number of blocks in each session during each week is represented in Table I.

Fifth week onwards the case started reporting noticeable changes in his speech outside the clinic.

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TABLE I. Showing the Average number of blocks in each session during all the weeks of therapy

<i>Week</i>	<i>Average no. of blocks in each session</i>
I.	156.55
II.	186.00
III.	135.72
IV.	37.57
V.	10.72
VI.	6.00
VII.	4.29
VIII.	6.00
IX.	0.86

The number of blocks reached the zero level during the ninth week and at this time he also reported some 70 per cent improvement outside the clinic. He was then discharged on 24-3-1969.

Frequent follow-up of this case has been made. The recent follow-up, made after 7 months of discharge indicated that the case has not only maintained the improvement seen at the time of discharge, but has shown further generalization of fluency. He did not think his speech presented any more problems to him and the case was quite satisfied with the outcome of therapy.