

Speak Out

Shelby Newland

The First Person on the Last Page



Kids who have speech delays, I want you to listen carefully to me. This article is about how you can speak out, work hard in school and so activities in order to accomplish your goals. I know it will be hard and you might have trouble, but you can make lots of friends and achievements. You have got to trust me because I have a speech delay and know how you feel.

Some kids are afraid to speak out. Speaking out is especially challenging for a kid with a speech delay. For example, when I was in first grade, I used to hide and not talk because I was shy about talking. I was shy because I was afraid someone might not understand me or make fun of me. I used to not have many friends because I would hide. When I realized I had no friends, I stopped hiding and made some friends. When I had a rough time, my friends would help me get through it.

Finally, at the end of my first grade year, my friends gave me courage not to be afraid and most important to do my best. It took me a while but I realized that I was not the only person in the world to have a problem speaking. In the Old Testament of the Bible, it states that Moses was slow at talking. Moses has a speech impediment! He went to the Pharaoh of Egypt and said "Let my people go!" He was not afraid to speak out. Also, Julia Roberts has a stuttering problem. She is a very successful

actress. Do you think she was afraid to speak out? Kids: Don't be afraid to speak out either!

Kids who have speech delays—why not work hard in school? In second grade I was afraid to read out loud or talk to my friends. I didn't get too far on my first reading fluency test but when my friends gave me courage through a pep talk, I did better. During my next fluency test I got much farther. A person in history that proved working hard in school helps accomplish your goals is Helen Keller. She was a blind and deaf woman who studied hard in order to learn how to communicate with adults and children. She was 13 years old before she learned how to speak. When she was an adult, she went around the world (to 39 different countries to be exact) visiting disabled, deaf, and blind children. She became a role model for those children and even for us today.

Some kids are afraid of doing activities like a speech contest or singing. When I was in fourth grade, I was afraid of doing the 4-H Speech Contest. I was afraid the judges wouldn't understand me. When I asked my friend if I should have participated in the speech contest, he said, "Shelby, you should have done the speech contest. You can talk just fine. They could have heard you."

I said, "I know but I was nervous."

"After you work hard in school, you can do anything." He replied.

It is because of his encouragement that I participated in the 4-H speech contest and won at the District level. Another activity I do is playing basketball. Guess what: You have to talk in basketball! I have to call out the plays so my team will know where to go on the court and how to work together. If we don't work together we can't win games. This is a great activity...win or lose!

If you are not into sports, maybe you want to sing. Just work hard in school, speak out, and you've got it! Mel Tillis is a well-known country singer who, you guessed it, has a speech problem. He stutters but he also sings. He has performed in front of large groups of people on stage and on TV. He was not afraid to do an activity he enjoyed so you don't have to be afraid to do activities either.

I have made many accomplishments by speaking out, working hard in school, and doing activities. That makes me feel awesome and proud. Who knows, you might finish speech lessons before I do. Kids: don't let a speech delay interfere with your goals! One more thing—keep trying!

Continued pg. 7