

Stephen Saintcyr

Professor: Bobbie Whitehead

English 110c

Introduction

The most memorable summer for me was with my younger cousin Sam, not for some special occasion or a significant event in our lives, but because it marked the summer when I discovered the true meaning of listening. Up until that point, speech and communication were things that I had never even thought twice about. I never paid attention to how people spoke or how words came out of my mouth, as I said, without any effort, even to construct sentences as I expressed my feelings. I did not comprehend how challenging it could be until I saw Sam struggling to speak.

A Narrative of Sam's Speech Impediment

Sam has always enjoyed himself he was active and enthusiastic. However, when Sam was four years old, something changed. It was not a radical shift from the traditional way, but gradually, it appeared to become more distinct. Instead of progressing as other children his age were doing, forming sentences from the words they knew, Sam seemed to be nervous when speaking. He could say one or two words, but when he attempted to utter phrases or complete sentences, they were slurred or stammered. Initially, even my family did not pay much attention to it. It is important to remember that every child has a unique rate of development, and some

children are slow learners. However, as the months went by, it became apparent that this was not a short-lived phase.

When Sam joined kindergarten, he had regular struggles with his speech my aunt and uncle took him to a specialist. He was diagnosed with speech difficulty he was sort of a stutterer who had a problem saying the words. It was not that Sam did not know what he wanted to say as his thinking process was as good as that of any other child in his age group, but his brain and tongue were not in sync. I could see it in how he would speak, barely managing to open his mouth, and his tiny fists would ball up as though the words would appear if he willed it hard enough.

During the summer, I went to Sam's house often, and that was when I could see how serious the problem was. The first time I realized that his stammer was a significant issue in his life was on a hot afternoon in July. We were outdoors, in the backyard. Sam's only new toy recently received was a toy car, which he loved and seemed keen to tell me all about, but when he began to speak, he could not speak properly. He would start uttering the words and then stop halfway through the sentence. His face turned sad as though he could not utter the next word. He would mimic words with his lips and jaws to speak without uttering a word. I realized that he was ready to talk, but he could not, and I could see the anger on his face. He threw the toy car down on the floor and backed off to the side of the house, looking sad. At one point, I was standing there, and what came to me was a kind of helplessness. I was at a loss for words on how I could set things right again. This is when I realized Sam stutters and is not just an irritation. It affected all areas of his life, from interacting with his cousins to communicating with teachers and fellow students.

In the next few weeks, I decided to focus on how Sam navigates the environment while stuttering. His mother accompanied him to the kitchen table in the mornings and urged him to pronounce his words more slowly. She would ask him basic questions such as: Do you want something delicious for breakfast? What is your desired activity for today? I would ask something, and Sam would answer briefly, and it seemed he was unsure. Sometimes, he would speak fluently, but sometimes, he would stop in the middle of a word and stammer before the words could come out of his mouth. His mother did not get easily annoyed, not even when Sam became more visibly annoyed. She would nod and reply to him, "Take your time, Sam; I am here listening to you." Seeing these interactions, I realized how long it took to interact with Sam. It was just important to be ready to let him speak the words out loud, no matter how long it would take. More importantly, you had to ensure he did not feel pushed to talk fast. As the pressure on Sam increased, he found it increasingly difficult to say anything and would become furious.

The more time I spent with Sam, the more I could observe other people's attitudes toward Sam because of his speech difficulty. Some were tolerant, like his mom, who allowed him to speak as he wished without interrupting him. But some did not take it so lightly. I saw people, including the grownups, cut him short while he was still speaking, not because they disagreed with him but because they could not stand the way he stuttered. I observed how other children would bully him, imitating his speech or giggling when he could not speak fluently. Every time it occurred, it was clear how Sam was pulling back into himself. However, no matter how teasing and frustrating it was, Sam never relented and kept trying. His parents took him to speech therapy, and every week, he had a therapist with whom he would practice special techniques that could help him deal with his stutter.

From this story of Sam, who suffered from a speech impediment, I understood that communication is much more than sharing words. It is about building a relationship, the feelings and stories behind the words, and being able to listen, wait, and provide comfort even when the words are unclear. I realized that listening is not only about ears but also about the way we take voices, even tones, gestures, and feelings. In addition, Sam's story helped me to realize that it is wrong to judge people and that everyone should accept everybody the way they are. Reflecting on that summer. This is something we can learn from him because it makes us listen better, more intently, and kindlier. In the end, that's the real significance of his story in his battle he taught all of us how to grow the self in how we speak and listen to others.