

A set of twins in matching, polka-dotted dresses, and satin, lace socks that fall perfectly over their shiny black church shoes walk up to me. "We've figured out why you talk like that", said the girl on the right side whose only physical difference from her identical twin was her two missing front teeth. Before I had a chance to respond, the twin on the left side, with all of her teeth still intact, blurted out, "It's cause your mama used to run a whole lot when you were in her belly, and now your words come out shaking." Oblivious to what they were talking about, I laughed and said, " Sh-h-haking? What a-rr-e you guys talking about?" "See!!" explained the twins. "You talk funny!"

I had a major stutter until I was about 13. After two years of my speech therapist teaching the stop-and-breathe technique and telling me what words I needed to stay away from, I was finally able to stop going to my appointments. Ironically, losing my stutter was one of the worst things that could have ever happened to my self-confidence. What most people don't understand is that I never once heard myself stutter until someone told me I did. And I definitely didn't think anything was wrong with me until some kid made fun of me. My words were beautiful to me. My words are still beautiful to me.

I was an extremely talkative and opinionated kid; so, when I stuttered, adults would try to interrupt me by finishing words I got stuck on or even sometimes cutting me off completely. Now for most people, being cut off would cause some embarrassment, forcing them to stop talking, but for me, it had the opposite effect. When an adult would begin putting the wrong words in my mouth, I would pause, smile politely, and rearrange the words in my own head. I would ask myself questions like "What am I trying to say?" and "What do they need to understand?" The first question would clear my mind, making the right words fall into place, and the second question would prevent me from getting frustrated and focus in on what I wanted them to walk away with.

Stuttering never made me talk less, but it taught me how to stand my ground and talk with certainty and thoughtfulness. It filled me with a sense of pride when people called on the girl with the stutter to speak in class. Listening to a person with a stutter is like listening to music: you can nod your head to the beat and only focus on the fact that they are stuttering but you will miss the melody and lyrics.