Vivian Sisskin, M.S., CCC-SLP, BRS-FD
University of Maryland, College Park, MD
vsisskin@umd.edu

Applying to College
Including Stuttering in your Essays and Personal Statements

**Tips:**

- Present stuttering in a positive light
  - Consider the language you use.
    - “Living” with stuttering is better than “suffering” or “struggling” with stuttering.
    - Stuttering can be a “difference” rather than a “disorder”, “impairment”, “disability”, “impediment” or “handicap”.
  - Write about how you have grown, changed, or matured because of your experiences with stuttering, therapy, or support.
- Include how your unique experiences and qualities will be positive contributions to the college community.
  - Using words such as “diversity”, “inclusion”, “tolerance” and “acceptance” in your ideas and plans might be helpful.
  - Example... Consider participation in groups such as “Best Buddies” if the college has a chapter.
  - Consider ideas for community service within the college community.
- Include a description of how you have changed/grown by including a real story or experience, something the reader can visualize.
  - Consider writing about an experience characterized by fear/avoidance, contrasted with an experience that demonstrated courage/confidence.
  - Include emotional content when describing these experiences (how you felt and what you thought).

**Ideas for content when describing yourself:**

**Personal Growth**

- **Insight** into your own behavior
- **Problem solving** based on what you learned in therapy or in a support group.
- **Acceptance** of things you can’t change and working to change the things you can. “I am more than my stuttering”.
- **Applying** therapy concepts to other areas of life (ie. facing fears).
- Ability to accept feedback and learning to **evaluate yourself** (successes/failures)
- **Maturity** inherent in knowing that ultimately you are responsible for the change you create.
Leadership Skills

- Supporting and reaching out to others new to the therapy process (or to the support group).
- Sharing your own strategies in the hopes of helping others.
- Taking responsibility for group dynamics by setting a model of contributing and responding to others.
- Being open about stuttering to help shape positive public perceptions of stuttering (advertising).
- Writing about stuttering, presenting about stuttering, making videos about stuttering in order to inform or educate others (consider what you have done in school, church, social groups, etc.)
- Taking a stand against teasing and bullying in your school and social networks.

Personal Qualities and Character

- Taking responsibility for your own behavior and for the changes you make.
- Taking initiative in seeking out speaking opportunities or opportunities to advertise stuttering.
- Awareness and sensitivity to all differences (not just stuttering), and setting an example of acceptance and tolerance.
- Diligence in working toward personal goals.
- Planning and organizational skills needed to carry out assignments and change long standing habits.
- Demonstrating courage in the face of fear.