

Book: Stuttering Adventures by Kim Block

Reviewer: Lisa Avery, M.H. Sc., RSLP

The paucity of books about children who stutter in her local library led Kim Block to author and self-publish a series of books herself: *Adventures of a Stuttering Superhero*. The first book in the series features, Melissa, a student who stutters, who sets out to find help for a classmate who has “interrupt-it is”, causing him to interrupt her and finish her sentences. Kim is a person who stutters and knows all too well how this strategy that is often used by listeners and although intended to be helpful, may actually make the situation worse. The person who stutters may begin to feel increased time pressure to finish their words and sentences which is likely to increase stuttering, not decrease it. This story provides a practical suggestion that children can try and hopefully have success, just like Superhero Melissa.

With this book, Kim is contributing to a small but growing collection that provides children who stutter with role models and positively influences how they perceive themselves. When Kim was growing up, she did not know anyone else who stuttered and believes that Melissa’s story would have helped her to feel less isolated and “normal”. Kim hopes that children who stutter will find comfort and support in the “me too” message of her books.

Unfortunately, children who stutter are at risk for being bullied, in fact, are more likely to be bullied than peers (81% vs 58%) and mostly about their stuttering (56%) (Langevin, 1998). Educating peers can help reduce the amount of bullying children are likely to experience (Craig and Pepler 1995) and Kim’s book is an excellent resource to use in the classroom and at home with siblings.

Kim has revealed that Melissa’s next adventure takes her to a conference for people who stutter where she finds out that she is not at all alone. The importance of connecting with other children who stutter is crucial for their health and self-esteem. Boyle (2013) reported on a study comparing adults who stutter with support group experience to those without any. Participants with support group experience demonstrated lower internalized stigma and were less likely to perceive fluent speech as highly or moderately important to being successful in their lives. Helping children to connect early with others who stutter can have important and significant outcomes for the rest of their lives and for choices they may make along the way. I’m excited about Kim’s second book in the series. Just like her first, it will be a welcome addition to my therapy library. And I hope its message will convince parents, teachers, speech-language pathologists and other health and education professionals of the importance of children meeting others who stutter and of their own role in facilitating these connections for the children.

I encourage you to purchase Kim’s book as a therapy resource and to request your school and public libraries to purchase them, too. Kim’s story has a powerful message, her writing and dialogue from the perspective of a child is so genuine, and the concept of "interrupt-itis" is very funny.

Adventurous of a Superhero can be purchased through Amazon and Chapters in print or through Ebook. Contact Kim directly through her website www.stutteringadventures.com where she has posted other resources to use connected with the book.

If you are interested in other books about children who stutter, I recommend this resource: <https://www.mnsu.edu/comdis/kuster/kids/kidsbooks.html>.

References:

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Langevin, M., Bortnick, K., Hammer, T., & Wiebe, E. (1998). Teasing/bullying experienced by children who stutter: Toward development of a questionnaire. *Contemporary Issues in Communication Science and Disorders*, 25, 12-24.