

# Burnaby author gives children who stutter relatable superhero

'I really wanted this character to be strong and confident,' says author

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Kim Block talked with CBC about her new series of children's books, *Adventures of a Stuttering Superhero*. (Kim Block/Facebook)

'It's okay to be different' is an idea that took Kim Block quite a few years to accept growing up with a stutter.

"I think it's very challenging," Block said. "Kids who have a stutter, we don't really know that there are other kids out there and so we grow up feeling very isolated."

It wasn't until she was in her 20's that she discovered other successful adults who stuttered and began to feel more comfortable with who she is.

She's now helping children fight those feelings of isolation with her new series of children's books, *Adventures of a Stuttering Superhero*, about kids who have trouble getting their words out.

"I think in movies or TV shows when they do show someone who stutters we're often casted as weak or nervous or we have some sort of emotional problems," Block said.

"I really wanted this character to be strong and confident and I wanted her to stutter in the story.

"So when you read the book the words that she stutters on, I have written them out as a stutter."

## Stuttering superhero

The first book, *Adventure #1 Interrupt-Itis*, introduces Melissa, a stuttering superhero who tries to cure a classmate who constantly tries to finish her sentences, a common frustration for people who stutter.

"What they don't realize is that it makes things even worse and it's giving us time pressure to say what we need to say."

The books were inspired by a student with a stutter who attends the Burnaby elementary school Block works at as a secretary. The student's class was without a presenter and Block decided to volunteer.

"I asked our librarian if she had any children's books on stuttering and she didn't. The closest thing that I could get was the book *It's Okay to be Different* by Todd Parr," Block said.

Knowing how difficult it is to find relatable resources for children who stutter, Block wrote a few short stories for the student and passed them along to her mother.

Block said if she had access to stories that reflected her speech struggle she would have felt "normal."

## Feared future

Her greatest worry as she grew into her teens was that she would be without work and homeless as an adult due to her stutter.

"I thought, 'Well, if I go for a job interview and there are five people who want this job, and four of those people don't stutter and I do, why on earth would they hire me?'"

"I just couldn't picture what my life was going to be like."

After attending a conference, Block was exposed to teachers, doctors and lawyers who faced the same realities she did and was able to find some peace and confidence in knowing she wasn't alone.

"As this series grows and the books come out, having those kinds of 'me too' experiences are going to happen for children who stutter who read these stories," Block said.

The *Adventures of a Stuttering Superhero* will continue with Melissa discovering others who stutter and will follow these new character's journeys as the series progresses.

Block's book is available on [Amazon.ca](#).

With files from the CBC's [On The Coast](#).

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