

The library is a place most students tend to forget about as they grow older. For others however, the library can be a quiet and safe place and becomes an escape from reality to organize their thoughts. From studying to sitting quietly and thinking, the library has helped me in numerous ways. Growing up with a stutter, I was always looking for somewhere to escape where I would not have to talk. Being afraid of speaking up is a constant battle I continue to fight. The library created a comforting environment on stressful days due to its isolation and allowed me to work on my fluency by checking out books to practice my speech with.

It seems ironic that a quiet place would benefit my speech as much as it did. From a young age, I realized I could not get words out as fast, or sometimes not at all, like everyone else could. Public speaking terrified me, and I knew I had to put in extra practice outside of speech therapy. It started with short picture books. I'd check out to read at home with my mom to read novels quietly to myself. A stutter cannot be cured, but hearing myself speak fluently gave me confidence that I can do it. "Bad speech days" are discouraging, but the library gave me a place to reflect on what I could do better and rebuild my confidence.

When it came to deciding on a career, I faced a mental block. I told myself that since I struggle with speaking, I would not be successful. This feeling is something I hope nobody has to experience. I soon realized that I could take my struggles and use them to help others; I decided on becoming a Speech-Language Pathologist. I will use my experiences, both good and bad, as motivation to help other people who struggle like I did. I plan to work at an elementary school and become my student's biggest supporter. I have had many influential speech therapists who have made me realize I am more than my disability and influenced my desire to make a difference. I would not be as confident as I am today without the library allowing me access to as

many books I needed. I will educate all my students on how the library is an exceptional resource for helping them improve their speech and self-esteem.

I would have never thought that a place that does not allow talking would help me grow so much. It will not be easy, but I am determined to bring awareness to the hardships children growing up with speech impediments may endure. I will continue to use the library as an aid to my success.

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