



## What is Selective Mutism (SM)?

Selective mutism/situational Mutism affects 1:140 children.

Some children are completely mute in many areas of their life – this is called high profile selective mutism.

Some children are able to say short sentences, or answer closed questions – this is called low profile selective mutism.

Children are able to speak when in a comfortable environment with comfortable people.

Often children with Selective Mutism are very loud and confident at home.

Children with Selective mutism can often have emotional melt downs at home due to masking and constant 'freeze' shut down all down.

When the child is with certain people or in certain environments the body senses an overwhelming sense of fear and closes down. The child enters 'Freeze', the body can literally 'play dead' in order to survive. This causes anxiety and fear for children and they often become fearful of going out as this reaction is not in their control.

The heart rate can increase but can also slow dramatically and cause children to become very cold.

Their movements get increasingly smaller.

Children can have other issues such as toileting and eating and agoraphobia.

Children do not choose to not speak. The muscles around the face and jaw tighten causing the larynx to be unable to move.

The Vague nerve is activated – this is the longest nerve in the body – it is responsible for fight/flight/freeze, it is also connected to the child's digestive system, and respiratory system which are also impacted from the involuntary reaction SM causes.

Selective Mutism causes the ear to listen for predatory sounds and lots of children with SM also have auditory processing disorders and sound sensitivity.

Children require patience, time, and care.

It is important to make environments safe and quiet.

Without treatment and support SM can go into adult hood!