

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.

Their movements get increasingly smaller.

Children can have other issues such as toileting and eating and stomach and muscle aches.

Children do not choose to not speak.

The muscles around the face and jaw tighten causing the larynx to be unable to move. This may cause their face to become very rigid.

The Vagus 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!

Information for Families



www.soundemotive.com

*Selective Mutism:
Creative
Communications*

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What can we do to help?

Always be patient.

Do not put pressure on someone with selective mutism to speak. Avoiding eye contact can also help them feel more comfortable.

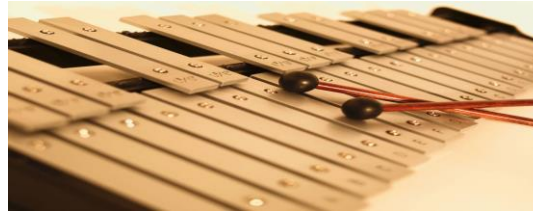
Ask the child's parents what ways this person communicates.

Ask a parent to sit in on time with you to support this young person.

Selective Mutism is a disability. This child may need help to eat, or use the toilet. You have a duty of care to this child to make sure their needs are met.

Offer choices through pictures, or hand gestures. Make the pictures relatable to you or your home, or try making them fun like cartoons, you could make useful pictures together with the child.

Make communication fun and engaging 😊



Always try and give choices, its empowering to feel you have chosen and your choice is respected.

Questions can be really tricky for SM Kids. Try fun games instead such as throwing a ball to one another, using toys as a medium to play, like cars or dolls.

Please, thank you, hello and goodbye can be difficult words. As much as we want polite children, we also want happy children. It is best to try waving or using signs for these words, or just giving them a miss until the child feels comfortable.

Remember every week might be the week a child speaks to you. Please do not give up on them, it could well be the week they have been working towards and any rejection could be extremely difficult. Children need you to be patient and 'hold the hope' for them.

If a child with Selective Mutism speaks to you, please do not make a fuss. There is no need for anyone else to know straight away and lots of fuss, even meant positively, could have huge negative feelings for the child and they may not speak to you again.

Ask a child's parent how they like to be rewarded. Many children do not like positive or negative attention, including

rewards. A simple quiet sticker or a smile goes a very long way.

Many children with Selective Mutism also have issues eating and using the toilet. Please provide food and drinks where necessary and suggest children toilet at regular intervals.

There is no quick fix for Selective Mutism, tiny steps are the key and sometimes they are too big, always think how you can make things smaller and easier to accomplish.

Engage in activities you can do without talking and make them fun. Baking, sports, bug hunts for example.

Remember the child can hear you, please be careful what you say in front of them 😊

Do not take it personally that a child is unable to speak with you. It takes time, patience and very small steps.

Many kids with SM are highly sensitive to noise and lights, textures and routines, please respect this and think how you can change your environment to be SM friendly.

Many children and adults with selective mutism feel very uncomfortable having their photo taken, please ask them if it is ok and respect their choice.

Build trust, have fun. SM kids are still kids and love to have to have giggle 😊