NHS
Ealing Community Partners

How to support students with Selective Mutism

A - Reduce the student's anxiety level.

B - Build confidence and self-esteem.

C - Create many comfortable opportunities for the student to participate and communicate across a range of settings.

Who do I contact?

Professionals in Ealing

If you have concerns , please get in contact with your child's nursery or school.

You can discuss concerns with your GP, Health Visitor or contact the local Speech and Language Therapy service.

Ealing SLT

Ealing Speech and Language Therapy
ESCAN
Carmelita House
21-22 The Mall
Ealing
W5 2PJ

Telephone: 020 8825 8856

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Selective Mutism or speaking anxiety

A fear of talking in some situations

Information and advice

Ealing Speech and Language Therapy Department

What is Selective Mutism?

A phobia of talking in some situations due to anxiety.

People with Selective Mutism speak confidently in some settings but will be consistently silent in other settings.

How to talk to someone with Selective Mutism

1. Chatty comments with rhetorical questions that need no answer, such as 'This is fun, isn't it?' 'I wonder what this is.'
2. Requests that can be answered by pointing, such as 'show me?', 'which one?'
3. Yes/No questions that can be answered by nodding or shaking head
4. Questions that can be answered with one word, such as 'X or Y?'
5. Simple questions that can be answered with one word such as 'which way is your classroom?'
6. Factual questions that can be answered with a phrase such as 'What school do you go to?'
7. Leave open ended and personal questions until later

Move on only when child is responding comfortably

Selective Mutism Do's and Don'ts

Do:

- Stay calm.
- Be open about talking being difficult for children sometimes. Tell them "it's OK-you'll talk when you are ready."
- Use comments to say what you are doing and thinking e.g. 'this is fun isn't it! I'm going to choose blue'.
- Accept all means of communication (e.g. nodding, pointing, showing, drawing, writing, typing).
- Use pictures, toys, games, art and practical activities to reduce anxiety and the need for the child to make eye-contact.
- Make sure home and school talk to each other frequently, such as through a link book.

Don't:

- **Don't** overreact if the child does or does not talk/communicate
- **Don't** ask the child why they're not talking/joining in
- **Don't** ask lots of direct questions
- **Don't** ignore the child's chosen method of communication (e.g. nodding, pointing, showing, pictures, drawing, writing, typing)
- **Don't** pressure the child to look at you or speak louder
- **Don't** work in isolation- be a team around the child!