



Selective Mutism

Is your child a chatterbox at home, but as soon as you leave the house, they stop talking and become painfully shy?

Does your child often complain of tummy aches before going to school in the mornings?

Does your child often have explosive meltdowns when they come home from school?

Does your child struggle to say please and thank you, hello and goodbye, even though you constantly ask them?

Does your child struggle to talk to relatives who are not living inside the family home like grandma or aunty?

Or perhaps you are a teacher, and you are feeling frustrated by the quiet child in your class who just won't answer the roll, no matter how much you have encouraged them to.

If any of this sounds familiar your child or that child in your classroom could be suffering from Selective Mutism.

Children with selective mutism want to communicate but cannot in certain social situations. The inability for them to speak has nothing to do with a language impairment or speech disorder. For a child to be diagnosed with selective mutism, their lack of speech needs to be persistent in certain social situations like school, for at least 1 month.

Selective mutism affects 1 in 143 children according to global statistics.

Selective mutism is Not a choice. The child cannot speak due to the 'Freeze Stress Response', an unconscious response the child has no control over. The freeze response shuts the child down preventing them from socially engaging.

When a child freezes they also struggle with non-verbal communication, such as waving, smiling, nodding, passing notes and making eye-contact.



A child with selective mutism has no idea why they cannot communicate in certain situations. This makes the child anxious, because they want to talk and engage, but they physically can't. When adults such as teachers, parents, and relatives try to encourage or force speech, this worsens the selective mutism.

Selective mutism needs a gentle approach, that uses a form of gradual exposure.

When working with someone who has selective mutism, we need to work on our expectations and mindsets, shifting our ideas from tough love to acceptance. As well as, being conscious of our own body language and tone of voice.

Through creating an understanding and non-judgemental environment, the child will grow in confidence and feel accepted, and this will allow their voice to naturally emerge.

To find out more about selective mutism and to connect with others please visit:

www.voiceforselectivemutism.com

If you would like to get in touch email: voiceforsm@gmail.com