

Children who can talk...but don't

Session four: Generalisation and transitions handout pack

Handout order	Handouts
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- | | |
|----|--|
| 1. | Session four PowerPoint handouts |
| 2. | Informal ways to work through the stages of one-to-one interaction (Informal techniques) |
| 3. | Talking in public places* |
| 4. | Progress chart: Generalising speech from one-to-one interactions to the classroom* |
| 5. | Progress chart: Record of independent social functioning and assertiveness* |
| 6. | Transition planning |
| 7. | Sample individual education plan (transition to mainstream secondary school) |

* Handouts have been sourced from:

Johnson, M. and Wintgens, A. The Selective Mutism Resource Manual. 2nd edn 2016.
London: Speechmark. www.routledge.com


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Children who can talk...but don't
Session four: Generalisation and transitions
Children's Therapies Service






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Before watching this training session

Please ensure that you previously accessed:

- Session one: Understanding selective mutism
- Session two: Effective, round-the-clock support

If supporting CYP aged five+, you should also have accessed:


- Session three: Implementing a small-steps programme

This training will refer to handouts from the session three pack that can be downloaded from the website. It will be beneficial to save or print the pack off in advance so that you can read them after the training session.

- www.kentcht.nhs.uk/childrens-therapies-the-pod/speech-and-language-therapy/selective-mutism/









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Aims

- To recognise the importance of working on generalisation.
- To understand how and when to work on generalisation with children and young people who have selective mutism (SM). This includes the development of spontaneous speech.
- To be able to support children and young people through transitions.









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Generalisation

- Supporting generalisation is key to ensure that the child or young person (CYP) is able to overcome their selective mutism.
- No guarantee that speech in one setting will transfer to other settings or to spontaneous speech, so it's important to maintain momentum and actively manage transitions.
- Just speaking to one or two people or answering questions doesn't count as "cured", so keep going - don't stop monitoring progress or running a small-steps programme at this point.
- May generalise spontaneously in pre-school settings after speaking to one or two new people, but manage transition into Year R.









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Golden rule - reassurance

- Remind CYP it goes at their pace, e.g. teacher will just be coming into resource room - no expectation to talk in class yet







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Generalisation

Children and young people need to generalise so they can:

- talk to **other people**
- talk to a new person in **different settings**, even when there are other people in the background
- talk in small **groups** and eventually whole class activities
- **initiate** conversations/requests for help rather than relying on others to prompt them.

Generalisation can be done formally, or informally, depending on the age and anxiety of the CYP.





Generalisation

Work on the following in any order but only change one thing at a time:

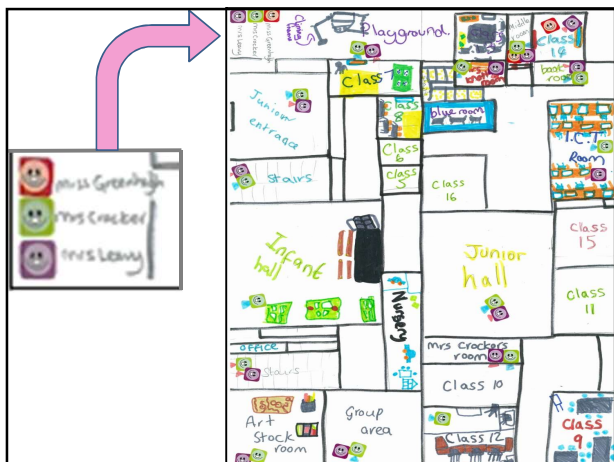
- slide in a new **person**, slide out original talking partner or keyworker
- repeat activities in a different **setting**
- increase **number** of people present
- include activities where CYP **initiates** speech (such as asks questions, gives instructions, gives clues, corrects others, seeks clarification).

Keep a balance and gradually cover **all** areas of generalisation.



Generalisation – informal vs. formal small-steps approach

- Informal: introduce games and activities as part of daily routine
- Small-steps programme: explain target beforehand and write it down.
- In a generalisation programme, targets tend to be longer so fewer stickers. When other children are involved for group activities, a sticker is just given to the child at the end of the session.



Generalisation – parent involvement

- Parents play a crucial role in generalisation by helping CYP talk to and in front of strangers.
 - See following handouts in the session four pack:
 - 'Do I answer if someone asks my child a question' page 2 of handout 'Informal techniques'
 - 'Talking in public places'.
- Parents can also help CYP talk to their friends and relatives by using the Triangle Tactic, covered in session two. See page three of handout 'Informal techniques'.



An advice sheet for parents of children with selective mutism (SM)

Do I answer if someone asks my child a question?

The short answer is No!

It's natural to step in when you see your child freeze. But if a child gets used to someone answering for them, they will adopt the role of silent partner whenever that person is around. One day they will answer and it's so important to have everything in place for that moment when they are ready to speak out.

A few Golden Rules:

Do not answer for your child. If you adopt the routine that follows, your child will learn that it's not so bad to be asked a question; everyone seems relaxed about it, whether they answer or not. They'll be far less wary of social situations in general. **Do not put your child under pressure to answer.** Calmly convey that it's fine if they answer and fine if they don't. You know they're trying hard and doing their best. **Do not apologise for your child.** They'll feel they've done something wrong. If appropriate, you can always explain later that your child wasn't being rude, or share how it makes you feel that others don't see your child as they really are.

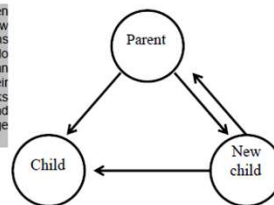
But now the long answer...

Follow this routine whenever someone asks your child a question and you'll be surprised how much easier it gets and how quickly your child succeeds in answering. *It's not usually necessary to tell younger children what you're doing or why, but if they ask or you want to prepare an older child, see 'Why does this work?' below.*

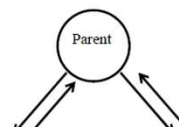
1. WAIT for a full 5 seconds (slowly count to 5)

4. The Triangle Tactic

a) Parent talks to children individually, redirecting new child's comments or questions as needed by asking Yes/No questions that their child can answer with gesture. As their child warms up, parent asks them 'X or Y?' questions and waits 5 seconds to encourage one word answers.



b) Child starts to talk to parent. Parent passes bits of each interaction on to the other child to keep both involved in the same conversation. As child answers with single words more easily, parent asks them more



14 TALKING IN PUBLIC PLACES

HANDOUT 14

An advice sheet for the adults who children with selective mutism talk to freely and comfortably



Note: this is not for adults who need to prompt or question the child to sustain conversation.

TALKING IN PUBLIC PLACES

An informal approach to generalising speech across different settings

Are you one of the people who a child with selective mutism (SM) talks to easily and spontaneously when no one else is listening? If so, you can gently help them discover that it's 'safe' for other people to hear their voice. Children who have SM need to talk in as many places as possible, so that nowhere becomes 'off limits'. And enabling them to speak to you in public, when other people are nearby, is the first vital step towards expanding their talking circle. This handout will help you gradually achieve this. But please take time to read it a few times for reassurance that the techniques let you work at your child's pace, so they don't become unduly anxious.

You have probably adopted several 'rescue' strategies for when you are together in public places and talking becomes difficult. Perhaps a combination of gesture, whispering and guessing sounds familiar? It's natural to fall back on these modes of communication when children become silent but, unfortunately, these strategies actually strengthen fear of speaking. Of course, never pressurise children to talk when they are not comfortable but,






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Generalisation – formal approaches

- School-aged CYP may require a more formal approach to supporting generalisation, *in addition* to informal techniques. This was covered in session three: Implementing a small-steps programme.
- If the CYP you are supporting is not able to generalise through informal techniques, please access this session for further information on small-steps programmes.
- As soon as CYP reaches stage seven (uses sentences *without* their parent present) keyworker can start work on generalisation.






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The stages of one-to-one interaction

Stage 1 – **Frozen** or absent
 Stage 2 – **Participation**
 Stage 3 – **Communication without talking** (CYP points, nods, writes etc.)
 Stage 4 – **Talking through parent/other** (CYP answers indirectly via parent, friend or voice recording)
 Stage 5 – **Voice** (child uses voice to read, count or to make a sound, for example, hums, laughs, 'uh-uh', brmmm!)
 Stage 6 – **Single word** response
 Stage 7 – **Phrase/sentence** response
 Stage 8 – **Connected** sentences
 Stage 8+ Group work, talking in public, free conversation and initiation






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Generalisation – formal approaches

- When generalising, go back to stage six activities initially (single words) and increase to stage seven – change one thing at a time!
- Many CYP start to speak spontaneously to their keyworker once they are at stage seven, as long as no-one else can hear, but it's okay if they don't - we'll come back to this.



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Generalising into the Classroom

- Do not expect CYP to use speech in whole class activities until:
 - half the class and teacher have heard their voice during sliding-in activities, small group work and/or voice recordings
 - CYP can talk or read to teaching assistant / teacher in classroom while other children are occupied
 - CYP can talk to their talking group in the classroom as a lesson activity
 - CYP has practised whole class lesson activities outside the classroom.

See handout: 'Generalising speech from one-to-one interactions to the classroom' from the session four pack

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5 TALKING TO THE CLASSROOM

PROGRESS CHART 5


GENERALISING SPEECH FROM ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS TO THE CLASSROOM

Part 1

Summary of individual targets (Sections A, B and C may be done in tandem)		Date achieved
A. Sliding in new peers and staff to group activities (no one else present)	Talk to keyworker in structured sentence-level activities on a one-to-one basis (in a private room outside the classroom or in the classroom, with no one else present).	
	Talk to keyworker plus a peer of student's choice, working from single word to sentence-level activities.	
	Adding one peer at a time, talk to keyworker and up to five peers of student's choice in a structured sentence-level group activity.	
	Repeat group activities without keyworker support.	
	Talk to keyworker plus teacher, working from single-word to sentence-level activities.	
	Complete a sentence-level activity with teacher; keyworker is not present.	
	Complete a sentence-level activity with keyworker, teacher and up to five peers. Start with a low-risk activity (eg reading aloud).	
	Repeat group activities with different peers (keyworker and student take turns choosing next peer) and/or work in different locations (see section B) until at least half the class has heard the student talking	
	Include classroom-related topics or activities in the group session.	







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Generalising into the Classroom



- As peers are involved, it may be necessary to talk to the class about supporting the CYP:
 - many CYP with SM do not want to talk in class in case it causes a reaction from peers who don't expect them to talk.
 - will then be helpful if teacher explains to class that the CYP is ready to start talking now, and it's important that no-one acts surprised when they talk - respond/ carry on as if the CYP has always been talking.


 


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VIDEO

- Megan's story being read to the class



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Books to support with talking about SM

Jessica Kingsley Publishers



Pages 30/31 Hannah's teacher talks to her class about her difficulty speaking and how they can help.




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Generalising into the Classroom

- As peers are involved, it may be necessary to talk to the class about supporting the CYP:
 - many CYP with SM do not want to talk in class in case it causes a reaction from peers who don't expect them to talk.
 - will then be helpful if teacher explains to class that the CYP is ready to start talking now, and it's important that no-one acts surprised when they talk - respond/ carry on as if the CYP has always been talking. See pages 30/31, 'Can I Tell You About Selective Mutism?'
 - older children can write or record their own message to the class (see 10 year old Megan in BBC1 documentary 'My Child Won't Speak' on YouTube).


 


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Hi My names Megan
Some of you know me, others might not.
I have been struggling for many years
with something called Selective Mutism

A different Megan, aged 15



 


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Working towards spontaneous speech

- Not all children and young people speak spontaneously to their keyworker when reaching Stage seven (sentences).
- They may be unable to 'let go' due to:
 - persistent maintaining factors (could be just one person putting them on their guard)
 - lack of reassurance (still small steps at their pace).

Check these factors first.

Working towards spontaneous speech

- Continue with graded questions (session two) between activities and outside planned sessions.
- Fade out adult prompting in turn-taking activities (such as 'Your go now' or non-verbal signal - eye-contact and a nod).
- Include stage seven activities to practice initiation, for example, CYP has to ask questions; give instructions/clues; correct speaker; seek clarification (see activities in the 'Active Listening for Active Learning' resource).



Working towards spontaneous speech

- Work at stage eight activities (connected sentences) with keyworker on a one-to-one basis, separately to other generalisation activities. Repeat with other adults or in small groups to follow stage seven activities
- Play 'calling out' games like 'Name that Tune', 'Snap!'
- Appendix A in Selective Mutism Resource Manual 2nd edition has suitable activities such as:
 - ask a series of questions to work out the answer (e.g. Twenty Qs)
 - give a series of instructions to make someone else complete a task (using own strengths and interests, teach adult a skill or how to play a game; barrier games; robot games)
 - Charades/'Don't Say It!'/Pictionary (calling out).



Working towards spontaneous speech

- First establish talking in class in structured activities (see 'Generalising into the classroom')
- Then set school-based targets for initiation, such as:
 - find out which flavour ice-cream is most popular in your class by the end of next week
 - Before next session, ask Mr Jones if he's finished with my book
 - Ask Mrs Singh this afternoon for the password to this file.

See handout 'Record of independent social functioning and assertiveness' from session four pack.



PROGRESS CHART 6

RECORD OF INDEPENDENT SOCIAL FUNCTIONING AND ASSERTIVENESS

LANGUAGE IS USED TO:	PLANNED ACTIVITIES		UNPLANNED/ SPONTANEOUS
	Structured/ semi-structured	Unstructured	
Request item	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Instruct/ direct/ teach			
Seek help			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Volunteer information			
Get adult's attention			
Ask for clarification			
Report illness			

IF INDEPENDENT SOCIAL 6

CHILD-INITIATED

Managing transitions



Transition to new class or school

- We must actively manage transition into a new class/school .
- Can't assume the CYP will generalise to their next teacher or classroom assistant if this is their first transition since starting to talk at school.
- Educate staff in new setting.
- Extra visits to new school or class prior to admission. If age-appropriate, take photos/make a book to refer to/show relatives.
- Introduce new staff prior to transfer or one-to-one post-transfer, using a familiar person to facilitate handover when possible.
- Review meeting after one term.
- See 'Transition planning' handout in session four pack.




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TRANSITION PLANNING
Preparing to change School, Class or Teacher or start at school or nursery

Time invested in agreeing and implementing a Transition Plan will ensure that the child adapts quickly to a new environment, builds on progress made and develops in confidence and independence.

A change of class and/or teacher can be a stressful time, particularly if a child is doing well and parents are afraid of losing momentum. However, if the transition is managed well, children can leave old memories and associations behind and gain confidence and independence in the new setting. Select age-appropriate ideas from the following recommendations.


1. It is vital that **all** staff in the new setting are educated about the nature and implications of selective mutism and that there will be no pressure on the child to speak until they are ready. Reassurance should be given to the child to this effect, both by parents and staff, telling them not to worry because they **WILL** be able to speak if they try it in small steps, one word or one person at a time. Staff must be ready to carry on as normal when the child is heard to speak without drawing attention to this fact. They should respond casually to **what** the child has said, rather than the fact that they have spoken.
2. Identify a learning mentor/keyworker/support teacher in the new setting who will provide an escape route if necessary and check on or meet with the child/student regularly to ensure they are happy, not being teased/bullied etc.
3. Preparation should start several weeks in advance with positive comments about the move and familiarisation with the building, classroom and staff. For example,
 - social visits with parents for summer fair, concerts, charity events, play schemes etc.



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Successfully managing transitions

- Pre-school transition to primary school
See example – Maria, aged four years eight months
- Transition to secondary
Sample individual education plan (IEP)



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Maria, aged four years eight months (1)

Maria had never spoken at nursery school. Intervention focused on actively managing her transition.

- Nursery staff removed pressure to speak and facilitated participation so Maria left nursery with positive social/group experience.
- A member of school's clerical staff (Lily) attended same church as Maria's aunt. Lily visited Maria at home and brought along some books she liked from Sunday school.
- Maria began talking to Mum in front of Lily, and then to Lily directly.



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Maria, aged four years eight months (2)

- Lily took Maria to school one evening, they chatted in classroom and empty playground.
- Maria visited reception class with Lily. Maria spoke to the teacher about a picture she'd drawn, and to a second teacher in playground.
- Mother invited future classmates round to tea during holidays.



(with thanks to Sylvia Baldwin, retired educational psychologist, for this example)




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Transition to secondary school (1)

- Look at it as a positive fresh start – all / most peers will not know about the CYP's SM so a chance to break free.
- Reassure that everyone will be anxious – a big change for all.
- Being receptive to friendship - body language is key


- Use summer holidays for working on 'Talking in public places' (session two) and shopping / travelling independently.



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Transition to secondary school (2)

- Many pupils will not want staff to know about their SM, but this is risky unless they are talking to strangers outside school, going out independently and determined to start talking at their new school. Tell pupils you need to make sure staff do not draw attention to them, as this will be their main concern.
- Staff must be prepared that the CYP may not answer or volunteer information. They must be ready to deal with this calmly and casually, and move on without drawing attention to them, for example, 'Good, I can see you're thinking hard about that, anyone else?'
- See 'Secondary transition plan' in session four pack.



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Sample Individual Education Plan
(transition to mainstream secondary school)

Written by secondary SENCo following meeting with parents and SLT in Term 6, prior to admission. Pupil HR had not attended primary school since year 3 but attended full-time on reintegration. This plan was shared with all staff prior to HR's admission and a video about SM was watched and discussed.

Name: H R

Information: H has been diagnosed with selective mutism and severe social anxiety. This sometimes causes her to freeze when compelled to speak or if watched too closely by other people. The same condition often causes her to speak at barely audible volumes to some people, notably authority figures. H may become very distressed if overwhelmed by a situation. H is terrified of getting anything wrong.

Objectives:

- For H to feel positive about her return to mainstream education
- For H to participate fully in the curriculum, using non-verbal means as required

Strategies:

Do not expect H to speak, all focus should be on welcoming H into the class making her feel happy, safe, involved and that she has a valuable contribution to make to the lesson.

Do not ask direct questions of H like 'How did you do that??' but make them rhetorical, for example, 'I wonder how you did that?'. This takes any pressure away from H feeling that she has to answer your question.

Wherever possible ensure H is sat with a friend. (we will know more about her friends after the first two days of term.) H does not tend to have difficulty communicating with other children.

When instructions have been given, ask H if she understands the task or homework quietly and expect a

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You have completed training session four: Generalisation and transitions

Depending on the age of the CYP you are working with, you will need to access the following training sessions:

	Early years	Primary school	Secondary and beyond
Session one: Understanding selective mutism	✓	✓	✓
Session two: Effective, round-the-clock support	✓	✓	✓
Session three: Implementing a small-steps programme		✓	✓
Session four: Generalisation and transitions	✓	✓	✓
Session five: Additional considerations for secondary+			✓

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Resources

- Can I Tell You About Selective Mutism?** (2012) by Maggie Johnson & Alison Wintgens, Jessica Kingsley
- Active Listening for Active Learning** Maggie Johnson and Carolyn Player, QED Publications: www.qed.uk.com
- Can't Talk, Want to Talk!** (2014) by Jo Levett, Speechmark Publications www.routledge.com
- The Selective Mutism Resource Manual** (2016) Speechmark Publications www.routledge.com
- Selective Mutism in Our Own Words** (2015) by Carl Sutton and Cheryl Forrester, Jessica Kingsley Publishers. www.jkp.com

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Further support

- KCHFT** Virtual family groups available to all relatives of CYP with SM who have accessed training. See website for further details: <https://www.kentcht.nhs.uk/childrens-therapies-the-pod/speech-and-language-therapy/selective-mutism/>
- SMIRA** (Selective Mutism Information and Research Association) – a parent/professional support group based in Leicester with free membership: info@selectivemutism.org.uk

SMIRA website www.selectivemutism.org.uk and **SMIRA Facebook Group** with free downloads, info packs and chat rooms (older CYP have their own 'SM Space Café' Facebook group).

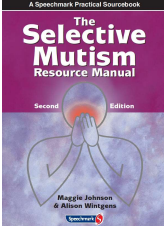
- ADVANCED TRAINING** (e.g. assessment, SM alongside other diagnoses) available at <https://coursebeetle.co.uk/cpd-masterclasses/>

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The Selective Mutism Resource Manual
Maggie Johnson and Alison Wintgens

This manual provides in depth information for parents and professionals on identifying and supporting CYP with selective mutism. The manual is accompanied by a downloadable 244 page online resource which contains assessment forms, progress charts and advice handouts, some of which have been included in your handout pack today.



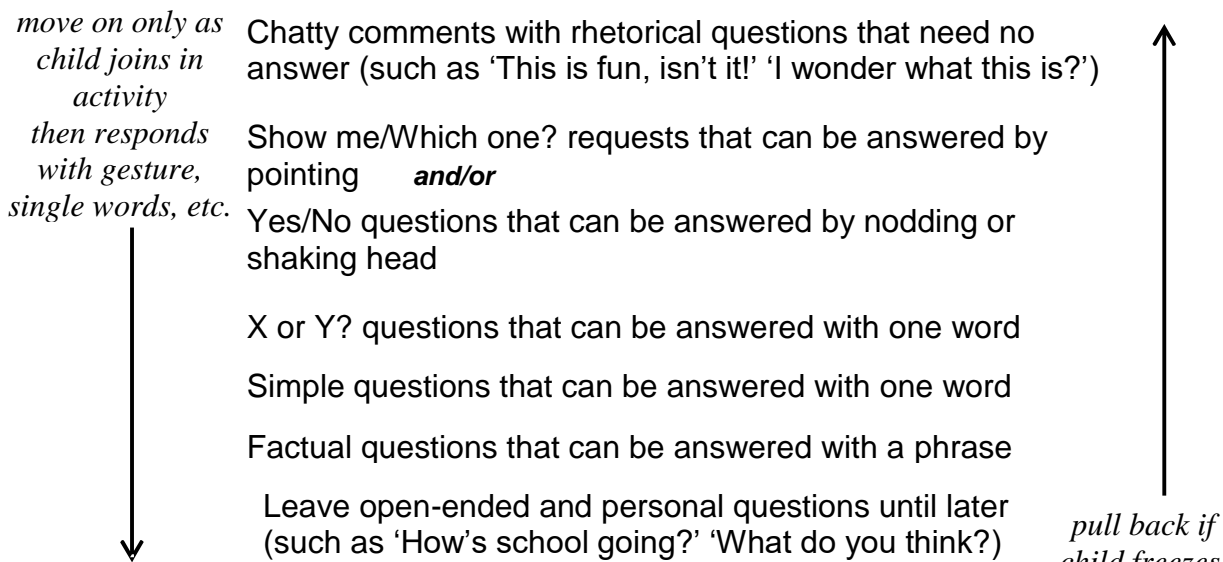
The Selective Mutism Resource Manual (2016)
Speechmark Publications www.routledge.com

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Informal ways to work through the stages of one-to-one interaction*

1. Graded questioning, at child's pace

Introducing questions to someone with selective mutism



N.B. Comments always outweigh questions!

2. Talking through parent or a friend

- Use parents or friends as 'go-betweens'
- Provide space to talk together, such as 'Why don't you two go into the book corner to discuss your plan' (*keep your distance and/or pretend to be occupied*)
- Ask questions via the friend/parent, such as 'Could you ask Pria where she put her lunchbox?' 'I expect you've got a favourite teacher – Mum, do you know who Joe's favourite is?' (*prime parents to redirect the Q rather than answer!*)
- Ask child to communicate via friend/parent, such as 'Tell Ben whose table you want to be on and we'll get it sorted',
- Move away or turn away initially, so that the conversation is private
- Gradually get closer until child talks to parent/friend in your presence
- It won't be long before they answer you without waiting for parent/friend to repeat the question

3. Talking to parents in front of other people

- No more whispering in parent's ear – parent moves to where child can talk to them *face to face* and soon the distance from other people will decrease
- Help parents to stop answering for their child and show them how to *support* their child to answer for themselves (see next page).

An advice sheet for parents of children with selective mutism (SM)

Do I answer if someone asks my child a question?

The short answer is No!

It's natural to step in when you see your child freeze. But if a child gets used to someone answering for them, they will adopt the role of silent partner whenever that person is around. One day they *will* answer and it's so important to have everything in place for that moment when they are ready to speak out.

A few Golden Rules:

Do not answer for your child. If you adopt the routine that follows, your child will learn that it's not so bad to be asked a question; everyone seems relaxed about it, whether they answer or not. They'll be far less wary of social situations in general.

Do not put your child under pressure to answer. Calmly convey that it's fine if they answer and fine if they don't. You know they're trying hard and doing their best.

Do not apologise for your child. They'll feel they've done something wrong. If appropriate, you can always explain later that your child wasn't being rude, or share how it makes you feel that others don't see your child as they really are.

But now the long answer...

Follow this routine whenever someone asks your child a question and you'll be surprised how much easier it gets and how quickly your child succeeds in answering. *It's not usually necessary to tell younger children what you're doing or why*, but if they ask or you want to prepare an older child, see 'Why does this work?' below.

1. **Wait** for a full 5 seconds (slowly count to 5).
If your child nods or shakes their head for Yes/No, that's fine. Add a comment to move the conversation on, e.g. 'Yes, we came last week, didn't we?' But with other sorts of questions your child will probably find it easier to answer if you don't look at them - fiddle with something if it helps!
2. If no response, make it a private conversation between you and your child:
 - gently **repeat** the question *or*
 - turn it into a **choice** 'X or Y?' *or*
 - **rephrase** it so that your child only needs to say Yes or No or nod or shake their head.
3. **Wait** for a full 5 seconds.
If your child answers or gestures, smile and add a comment to move things on. Keep any acknowledgement of this great achievement for a private moment - your child doesn't want attention drawn to their talking in public.
4. If no response, **move the conversation on** without answering, such as
 - say to your child 'We'll have a think about that, won't we?' or 'Tell me later'
 - ask the other person a question to divert attention from your child
 - change the subject
 - say your goodbyes

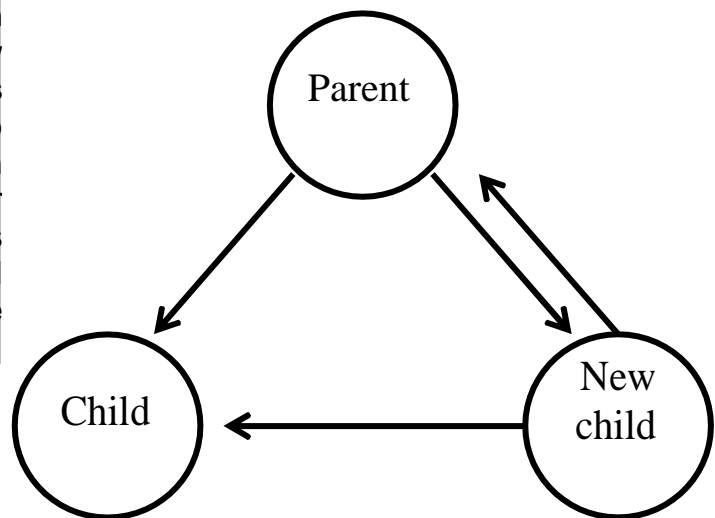
Why does this work? Your child will learn, *without any pressure*, that:

- questions are for the person who's been asked – no-one else will answer
- you know they will get good at answering if they keep trying
- *it's not a big deal* if they don't manage it, no-one minds, it's still a good day!

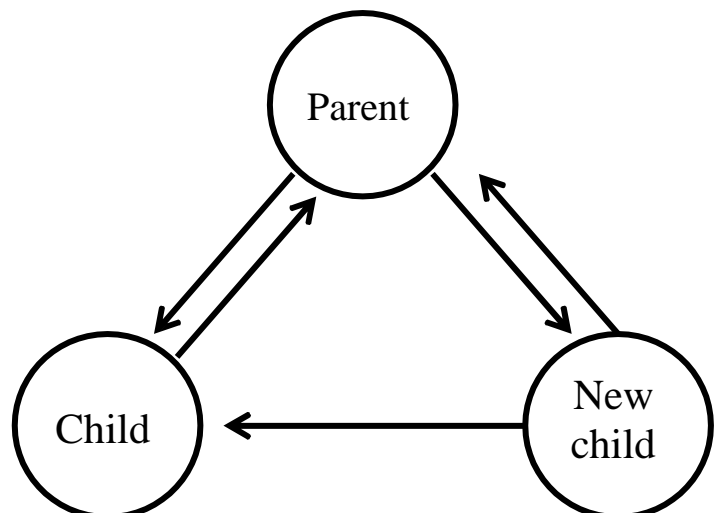
WAIT \implies **REPEAT/REPHRASE** \implies **WAIT** \implies **MOVE ON**

4. The Triangle Tactic

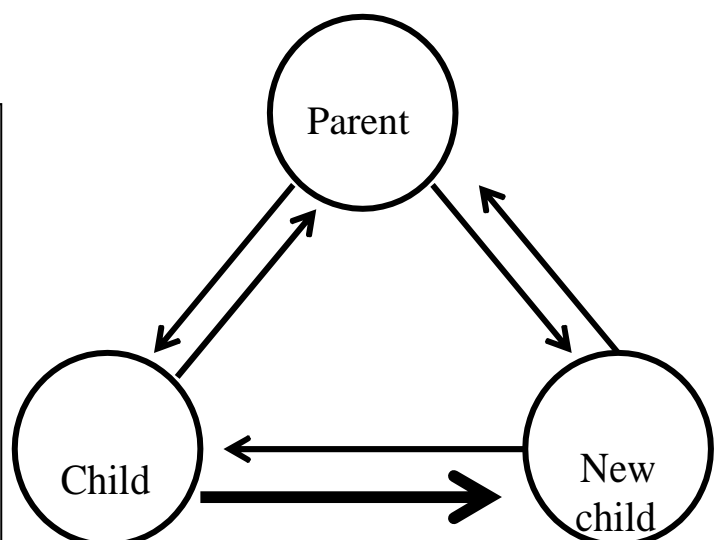
- a) Parent talks to children individually, redirecting new child's comments or questions as needed by asking Yes/No questions that their child can answer with gesture. As their child warms up, parent asks them 'X or Y?' questions and waits 5 seconds to encourage one word answers.



- b) Child starts to talk to parent. Parent passes bits of each interaction on to the other child to keep both involved in the same conversation. As child answers with single words more easily, parent asks them more general questions.



- c) Child talks more to parent and starts to make more general comments. Parent continues to redirect new child's questions but waits a full 5 seconds before doing so. Parent also introduces a 5 second pause before responding to new child's comments, creating more opportunities for their child to cut out the middle man and talk to new child directly.



5. Reading Route

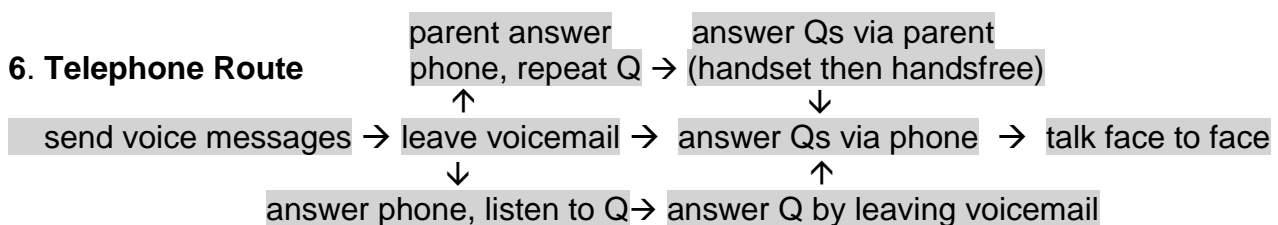
This is an excellent starting point for children and young people who are competent readers and are able to read aloud when on their own with a keyworker. As such it represents the quickest route to establishing speech, but should never be adopted if it causes distress or 'shut-down'. An advantage of this method is that it does not require a parent or other talking partner's presence.

Reading aloud is usually less daunting than other verbal activities as the child does not have to worry about saying the wrong thing or being expected to enter the unpredictable and personal world of conversation. Success is dependent on the child knowing that their difficulties are understood, and trusting that by reading aloud they will not suddenly be expected to speak any more than they feel comfortable. It also helps to sit beside rather than opposite the child, following the text so the child does not feel scrutinised as they read. Young children may approach this route via reading groups, where children read the same text in unison and join in as best they can, following the text with their finger and saying whichever words they can manage. Older children and teenagers may be able to read aloud following a period of rapport-building and explanation of their difficulties: introduce it by saying that you understand that certain things like being asked unexpected questions can be very difficult, but that reading aloud is usually easier because they won't need to find their own words to express themselves.

Activities can be moved towards true communication in a few sessions as follows, starting with a familiar paragraph or piece of work that the child has looked at in advance:

- a) child reads a short passage.
If voice is steady and audible rather than whispered or strained, it is possible to go straight to d). Otherwise use b) and c) for smaller steps to improve voice through repetition and gradual relaxation.
- b) keyworker and child take it in turns to read alternate sentences from a short passage or familiar poem.
- c) (emphasis moving from reading to more interactive turn-taking):
Keyworker and child read different characters' lines from a set number of pages or for a set number of minutes (local amateur dramatic companies will have comedy and pantomime scripts you can borrow and TV scripts are available to download. See also 'I Say!' in STASS catalogue.
or Child reads out numbers, the days of the week and months of the year and then says them alternately with the keyworker, aiming for steady pace, rhythm and voice (may be quiet but should not be strained).
- d) reading games and activities involving turn-taking, questions and answers.
Such as the keyworker asks questions that can be answered by reading out from the text; the child reads out crossword clues for the keyworker to solve.
- e) activities involving turn-taking, questions and answers without reading

6. Telephone Route



7. Zoom / Facetime / Skype Route (video chats)

Do not worry how long this takes – it might take one session or several sessions, but your perseverance will always pay off! Don't leave too long between sessions for best results – no more than 2 or 3 days. Ideally, carry on the next day.

1. Parent arranges a guessing game to play with friend or relative (N) via video chat, such as Hangman, Battleships, adapted Pictogram, Guess Who? or Headbanz. Start with games that need single words and build up to sentences. See next page for Battleships grid.
2. It's OK if child doesn't want to be in camera range at first, they can just watch, no need to join in straightaway. They'll gradually get closer to parent as they realise there's no pressure to talk and the game looks good fun. Often children come closer if parent pretends to get stuck, such as 'Oh dear, what's that, it looks really weird!'; 'Hmm, I wonder if I should go for H6 or H7?'
3. N and parent chat to each other as usual. N doesn't ask the child any direct questions but talks to them commentary-style, such as 'You won't believe what Nana did the other day...'; 'You're good at this, aren't you?'
4. Parent involves the child by asking questions where they can respond by pointing, nodding or shaking their head, such as 'Do you think it's a dinosaur?', 'Shall I choose this square or that one?', but puts no pressure on them to talk to N. Parent responds to the child's gestures as if they are talking, such as 'Great idea, you just sank one of Sam's submarines!' When that's easy...
5. Parent asks the child choice questions ('X or Y?') where the child answers with one word, such as 'What do you think Grandad's drawn this time, do you think it's a **dragon** or a **camel**?' Parent waits 5 seconds (keep smiling, don't look anxious!) and moves on if the child doesn't respond, 'I'll try... **camel**'. Children often find it easier to correct you than reply, so get it wrong!
6. Once the child is chatting *easily* to parent, it's OK for N to ask them direct questions, but still the focus is on N playing and chatting with *parent*, rather than trying to get the child talking. At this point we are just aiming for the child to be comfortable talking to parent in view of N.
7. If N asks the child a direct question, parent must always wait 5 seconds to give them a chance to answer. If no response, parent repeats the question to the child or makes it easier (turns it into a yes/no question or an 'X or Y' question). There is no pressure to answer N, the child can answer the parent (the parent acts as a 'talking bridge' between N and the child).
Such as Grandad: Give me a clue, Liam. What family does it belong to?
Mum (after 5 seconds): What family does it belong to, Liam. Is it a plant or an animal?
8. As soon as the child wants to play the game, let them take a turn. This is the best way for them to talk directly to N but parent should stay for another couple of games to make sure the child doesn't need them as a talking bridge.
9. Once the child is playing the game well with N, their parent leaves so they can play it unsupported. If the child seems anxious, leave just for a short while, for example to get a drink, and promise to be back very soon. This is where games are so valuable as they give the child a familiar structure for talking which is much less scary than an open-ended conversation.
10. Build up to games like 'Don't Say It!' which feel just like conversation and promote free talking.

Battleships

The object of the game is to sink your opponent's fleet before they sink yours. Each player has a 10 × 10 grid on which they fill in the squares to depict various vessels (see next page). A second 10 × 10 grid is used to record the hits and misses when attacking the other player. Players take it in turns to target one of their opponent's squares, hoping that they will score a direct hit. When successful, they are told what type of vessel has been struck, and this helps guide their next 'missile'.
Players send a missile by naming a square ('D4', 'E9', etc.). Their opponent replies 'miss', 'submarine', 'tanker', etc. The original player then writes 'S', 'T', etc. in the square or marks it with a dot if it's a miss. Their opponent can cross out the square on their own grid to make sure no cheating is going on!

Handout A1 Battleships

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A										
B										
C										
D										
E										
F										
G										
H										
I										
J										

Add to grid:



1 battleship



5 submarines

2 tankers

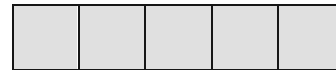


3 cruisers

BATTLESHIPS!

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A										
B										
C										
D										
E										
F										
G										
H										
I										
J										

Find and sink:

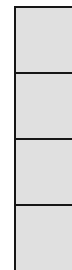


1 battleship



5 submarines

2 tankers



3 cruisers

An advice sheet for the adults who children with selective mutism talk to freely and comfortably

Note: this is not for adults who need to prompt or question the child to sustain conversation.

TALKING IN PUBLIC PLACES

An informal approach to generalising speech across different settings

Are you one of the people who a child with selective mutism (SM) talks to easily and spontaneously when no one else is listening? If so, you can gently help them discover that it's 'safe' for other people to hear their voice. Children who have SM need to talk in as many places as possible, so that nowhere becomes 'off limits'. And enabling them to speak to you in public, when other people are nearby, is the first vital step towards expanding their talking circle. This handout will help you gradually achieve this. But please take time to read it a few times for reassurance that the techniques let you work at your child's pace, so they don't become unduly anxious.

You have probably adopted several 'rescue' strategies for when you are together in public places and talking becomes difficult. Perhaps a combination of gesture, whispering and guessing sounds familiar? It's natural to fall back on these modes of communication when children become silent but, unfortunately, these strategies *actually strengthen fear of speaking*. Of course, never pressurise children to talk when they are not comfortable but, equally, don't convey that you think talking is impossible for them. By changing your support strategies, and talking openly about what you are doing and why, you can gently provide the opportunities children need to master their anxiety and gain confidence.

To start, check that you are not falling into any of the rescue 'traps' below when you are *alone* with your child. This is a good time to practise the techniques initially! You will find it increasingly natural to use the same techniques when strangers are in the distance; then as strangers get closer; until eventually your child can even talk to you in front of people they know.

Key: C = child or young person

1 Talk to the child about their fear

When C is relaxed and comfortable at home, talk openly and casually about SM like any other fear. For example: 'Talking feels scary at the moment, but you'll get braver and it will get easier and easier'; 'I know talking feels hard at the moment, but you'll get there'; 'No one will mind if you don't talk straightaway. They know children often need a while to settle in first'; 'It's OK to feel scared about going somewhere new, that's normal. It won't last'.

C needs to believe:

- ★ You are not worried and are confident they'll get over their fear.
- ★ Their fears will pass and are *not* part of their personality.
- ★ If ever they can't answer, it's not a big deal and no one will mind.

2 Smile

Check your face! If you are worrying that C won't talk, your face will be tense and immobile. An anxious face looks like disapproval or sadness to a child. You may be worried on the inside but, on the outside, try to look happy, sound relaxed and act as if it's only a matter of time before C talks.

3 Give your child time to respond

To turn things around, you will need to do the hardest thing of all – **wait** a full 5 seconds after asking a question, even if you sense that C is aware of other people nearby. It's important to talk about this, *not at the time* but when you are both relaxed, using whichever combination of the following explanations feels right.

- a) I'll always give you a chance to answer because I know it's going to get easier and easier for you.
 - b) If I guess I might get it wrong.
 - c) I'm helping you to be braver about talking. It's OK, you only need to talk when you feel ready, just see how you feel.
- ★ So ... **wait** a slow count of five. Then, if no response ...

TRAP 1**4 Don't guess!**

Do not guess the answer or offer items until C finally nods or chooses one. Every time you guess correctly, C is less likely to talk the next time. C may not be able to answer straightaway but there are several ways to make it easier for them to speak as this handout explains ...

5 Prompt with alternatives (X or Y?)

This is an acceptable alternative to guessing. Give C a choice of two:

- ★ Prompt by providing an alternative, 'X or Y?', eg
 - 'Shall we go on the slide or swings first?'
 - 'Which pizza do you fancy tonight – mushroom or pepperoni?'

Wait ... If there are more than two choices add 'Or something else?'

Wait ...
- ★ If there is no response, smile and **move on** (change subject) or **move away**, eg
 - 'That's OK, tell me later' (*don't go to the pizza aisle just yet*)
 - 'That's fine, I can decide' (*don't always choose their favourite*)
 - 'Come round the corner and tell me' (*move to a 'safe' place*).
- ★ If C tries to communicate by gesture, follow procedure 6.

6 Don't let gesture be a substitute for speech**TRAP 2**

- ★ It's natural for C to point to an object to show what they want; or to answer a 'yes/no' question such as 'Would you like an ice-cream?' by nodding or shaking their head. Follow these up whenever possible with a question where gesture *won't* do, eg 'What sort?'; 'Chocolate flake or no flake?'. Try to ask fewer 'yes/no' questions and keep items out of sight to reduce pointing.
- ★ If C tries to tell you something more complex by using gesture, don't get into a game of charades! Quickly seek clarification, eg 'Sorry, I don't know what you mean'.
- ★ If C doesn't answer, provide an alternative, 'X or Y?', eg:
 - 'Do you want me to *look* at something or *listen* to something?' (C is pulling at your sleeve)
 - 'Are you showing me the *slide* or the *dog*?' (C is pointing across the park)
 - 'Does that mean you want to *go* or you want to *stay* a bit longer?' (C is shaking his or her head)
 - 'Are you thinking it's a *good* idea or a *bad* idea?' (C is looking surprised)
 - 'Does that mean you *can't decide* or you *don't want anything*?' (C is shrugging his or her shoulders).

Wait for an answer (a full 5 seconds).

- ★ If no response, **move on** or **move away**, as described in procedure 5.

7 Don't encourage whispering in your ear**TRAP 3**

The closer people get, the quieter C's voice is likely to become. That's OK, it will get louder as C becomes desensitised to talking in public. Get down to C's eye level, if necessary, and accept a quiet voice, but don't let C hide the fact that they are speaking, by whispering in your ear. This strengthens their belief that talking in public is not safe, making it harder to talk another time.

- ★ Avoid turning or lowering your head, so that C can whisper in your ear.
- ★ Maintain eye contact with C and quietly say 'It's OK to talk here'. Smile and **wait** (a full 5 seconds).
- ★ If no response, give appropriate reassurance, eg 'It doesn't matter if anyone from school sees you – they already know you talk to me'; 'I know you feel worried but nothing bad's going to happen'. **Wait** ...
- ★ If no response, but you have a good idea of what C wants to say, prompt with an alternative, X or Y?, eg 'Cola or lemonade?' **Wait** ...
- ★ If no response, smile and **move on**: 'That's OK, tell me later' (*don't start guessing*) or **move** just far enough **away** so that C *can* talk (see procedure 5).
- ★ If C tries to communicate by pointing, follow procedure 6.

8 Be aware of position

If C is not responding and darts looks at bystanders, it is often the fear of being *watched*, rather than being overheard, that is increasing their anxiety.

- ★ Reduce anxiety by turning away or moving so that you can talk side-by-side, out of people's vision, eg at a wall display or notice board or behind a screen. As C relaxes, gradually return to your original position.
- ★ C may initially feel more comfortable at the side of a room or near a doorway. Respect this and wait for their anxiety to subside before moving to a more central position.

9 Be positive and realistic

Keep your own voice low-pitched and calm and never convey anxiety, frustration, disbelief or disappointment because this will increase C's already negative associations with the expectation to talk.

- ★ If it has taken a lot of persuasion just to get C to attend an event, acknowledge their effort and achievement: 'You're doing really well!'
- ★ Whenever C talks, give a big smile and respond quietly and positively without making a huge fuss about the fact that they spoke, eg 'Oh good – that's my favourite flavour too!'
- ★ Later, out of public gaze, you can be more specific: 'Wow, it was fantastic the way you helped me out there and ignored everyone else in the shop!'
- ★ Occasionally, time is of the essence and you need to be realistic to ensure success. For example, rather than cave in and resort to guessing when you finally reach the fast-food counter, it is better to ask C what they want *before* joining a long queue. There will be plenty of other opportunities to practise at the counter when the place is less busy.
- ★ Don't worry if C speaks extremely quietly – they will get louder the more they talk in public and learn that it is 'safe'.
- ★ Don't ask C to speak louder. C may find this critical or unnecessary. Be natural and honest, eg: 'Pardon?'; 'Sorry, there's too much noise, what was that?'. Let C work out what they need to do!
- ★ If a stranger unexpectedly asks C a question, follow the same routine: smile, **wait**, prompt, **wait** and move on, if necessary, rather than answer.

10 Keep it up!

You may be convinced that these techniques won't work because your child never speaks to you in public when you are close to other people. But perhaps C never speaks in those situations because you have never *consistently* put these techniques into practice!

- ★ Set yourself the task of applying these techniques *consistently* for two weeks before dismissing them.

- ★ Don't expect it to be easy. The techniques may feel counterintuitive at first but children need you to provide the opportunity for them to challenge their fears safely and discover that they can rise above them.
- ★ This is **not** about making children go without things, to force them to speak. It's about calmly conveying that you know C will be able to speak as their anxiety subsides. C will gain strength from your faith in them. You talk to each other at home; it can be the same outside, especially if you move slightly out of other people's vision and earshot.

For example, when it's quiet and there's no queue, don't be afraid to order only for yourself at the fast-food counter, giving C 'a bit longer to think' about what they want. There is now a very good chance that C will tell you while the server gets your order. If they don't, you can return after C has told you at your table (pick a less public one at the side rather than in the centre of the room). There is no question of C going without a meal; C just needs to find the right moment to summon up courage and speak. Persevere and *you will find that moment coming sooner and sooner*.

- ★ If you feel that you are getting nowhere, take a break! Stick to light-hearted comments without asking C any direct questions. Fall back on a question that C can answer by nodding or shaking their head. Then move further away from bystanders and try again.
- ★ Keep a record of where C has managed to speak to you in public; how many other people were present; how close they were; and whether any were connected to C's school or other organised activities. This will enable you to see what progress is being made, what reassurances you may need to give, and how you can gradually increase the challenge next time.

Good luck!

<p>Practise and memorise this sequence!</p>	<p>If C wants to whisper, say 'It's OK to talk here'.</p> <p>Wait for C to speak ... <i>If no response ...</i></p> <p>Offer an alternative, 'X or Y?' <i>or</i></p> <p>Replace gesture with an alternative, 'Do you mean X or Y?'</p> <p>Wait ... <i>If no response ...</i></p> <p>Move on or move away. Don't guess!</p>
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WAIT \Rightarrow **REPHRASE 'X or Y?'** \Rightarrow **WAIT** \Rightarrow **MOVE ON**

Why does this work?

Your child will stay calm and learn that:

- ★ being seen or heard to speak to you in public does *not* lead to increased pressure to speak
- ★ with an expectation to do only what they can manage, there is no need for avoidance strategies.

GENERALISING SPEECH FROM ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS TO THE CLASSROOM

Part 1

Summary of individual targets (Sections A, B and C may be done in tandem)		Date achieved
A Sliding in new peers and staff to group activities (no one else present)	Talk to keyworker in structured sentence-level activities on a one-to-one basis (in a private room outside the classroom or in the classroom, with no one else present).	
	Talk to keyworker plus a peer of student's choice, working from single word to sentence-level activities.	
	Adding one peer at a time, talk to keyworker and up to five peers of student's choice in a structured sentence-level group activity.	
	Repeat group activities without keyworker support.	
	Talk to keyworker plus teacher, working from single-word to sentence-level activities.	
	Complete a sentence-level activity with teacher; keyworker is not present.	
	Complete a sentence-level activity with keyworker, teacher and up to five peers. Start with a low-risk activity (eg reading aloud).	
	Repeat group activities with different peers (keyworker and student take turns choosing next peer) <i>and/or</i> work in different locations (see section B) until <i>at least half the class</i> has heard the student talking.	
	Include classroom-related topics or activities in the group session.	

B Structured activities in settings where student may be overheard	Repeat individual or group activities in other settings where the student is <i>unlikely</i> to be overheard, including the student's classroom (eg empty classroom at lunch-time, playground during lessons, vacated assembly hall).	
	Repeat individual or group activities in settings where the student may be overheard by a <i>few</i> people (eg original room with the door open, original room with peer(s) or adult(s) working separately at another table, dining room before lunch, corridor during lessons, table outside own classroom, corner of playground).	
	Repeat individual or group activities in settings where student may be overheard by <i>many</i> people (eg dining room at lunch-time, corridor between lessons, in a museum during school trip, centre of playground).	

C Preparation for transfer to class	The student has been reassured that they won't be picked to answer a question or read aloud in front of the class <i>unless they volunteer</i> .	
	Practise roll-call in small group sessions.	
	Half the class has heard the student talking outside the classroom <i>or</i> the whole class has heard a recording of their voice <i>and/or</i> the student and the teacher are confident that peers will not comment when the student talks.	

Notes If the student reverts to a whisper or strained voice at any point, repeat the activity or make the target easier to regain voice.
For students making a 'fresh start', omit Sections A and B.

GENERALISING SPEECH FROM ONE-TO-ONE INTERACTIONS TO THE CLASSROOM

Part 2

	Summary of individual targets (Sections A, B and/or C complete)	Date achieved
D Transfer to classroom setting	Consider the student's positioning for the first three items, as they will not want the rest of the class to see their lips moving initially; .	
	With the rest of the class occupied, talk to the keyworker at own table or work station during class time: (a) on a one to one basis (b) with peers* seated at same table.	
	With the rest of the class occupied, talk to peers* during class-time: (a) in a paired activity (b) in a group activity	
	With the rest of the class occupied, talk or read to the teacher at the student's table or work station or at the teacher's desk: (a) on a one-to-one basis (b) with peers* seated nearby.	
	As the student gains confidence talking to individuals and small groups in the classroom, move on to the final section where they talk in front of the whole class (flexible order).	
	Keyworker practises class activities in advance with the student or allows the student to check their answer with them first, to give the student the confidence to put up their hand to answer a question or take their turn for a prearranged question.	
	Take turns in a low-risk whole-class activity involving a familiar rote sequence or reading aloud (eg go round the class counting in twos, fives or tens; take part in a play reading; read aloud from a PowerPoint presentation).	
	Participate verbally in roll-call (can be made easier if students call out their number in the register, rather than 'Good morning', etc).	
	Participate verbally in circle-time when given warning or preparation time for topic or activity.	
	Volunteer an answer without checking with keyworker.	
Participate verbally in circle-time without warning of topic, or answer unplanned question.		
Note any other contribution to class discussion, either prompted or voluntary:		

E Talking in public places	Have lunch and chat with peers* .	
	Participate in class assembly by singing or speaking in unison.	
	Read aloud in a class assembly which includes a warm-up activity such as singing or speaking in unison.	
	Work on a class assignment <i>outside the classroom</i> with peers* (eg collect leaves and name as many different trees as possible).	
	Show a new or younger student around the school.	
	Talk to peers* at after-school club or other organised activity (eg on coach during school trip, in swimming pool changing room).	

* Refers to peers who the student has spoken to comfortably in previous small group sessions.

RECORD OF INDEPENDENT SOCIAL FUNCTIONING AND ASSERTIVENESS

LANGUAGE IS USED TO:		PLANNED ACTIVITIES		UNPLANNED/ SPONTANEOUS
		Structured/ semi-structured	Unstructured	
CHILD-INITIATED	Request item			
	Instruct/ direct/ teach			
	Seek help			
	Volunteer information			
	Get adult's attention			
	Ask for clarification			
	Report illness			
	Report incident			
	Contradict/ correct			
	Initiate social contact			
EMOTIVE CONTENT	Share personal information unknown to listener			
	Share likes/ dislikes			
	Answer, even though unsure if correct			
	Express opinion			
	Speak, even though unsure of consequences			

Tick and date as each type of interaction is achieved or observed. If there is no evidence of spontaneous use, consider building skills and confidence through planned activities.

Transition planning
Preparing to change School, Class or Teacher or start at school or nursery

Time invested in agreeing and implementing a Transition Plan will ensure that the child adapts quickly to a new environment, builds on progress made and develops in confidence and independence.

A change of class and/or teacher can be a stressful time, particularly if a child is doing well and parents are afraid of losing momentum. However, if the transition is managed well, children can leave old memories and associations behind and gain confidence and independence in the new setting. Select age-appropriate ideas from the following recommendations.

1. It is vital that **all** staff in the new setting are educated about the nature and implications of selective mutism and that there will be no pressure on the child to speak until they are ready. Reassurance should be given to the child to this effect, both by parents and staff, telling them not to worry because they **WILL** be able to speak if they try it in small steps, one word or one person at a time. Staff must be ready to carry on as normal when the child is heard to speak without drawing attention to this fact. They should respond casually to **what** the child has said, rather than the fact that they have spoken.
2. Identify a learning mentor/keyworker/support teacher in the new setting who will provide an escape route if necessary and check on or meet with the child/student regularly to ensure they are happy, not being teased/bullied etc.
3. Preparation should start several weeks in advance with positive comments about the move and familiarisation with the building, classroom and staff. For example:
 - social visits with parents for summer fair, concerts, charity events, play schemes etc.
 - look round school/class when the building is empty (during holidays or after school) to get used to talking to parents on the premises
 - take photos and make a booklet about My New Class/School
 - meet the head/SENCo/class teacher/key staff in as informal a situation as possible. Include younger siblings if available and appropriate. Do not be surprised if the child speaks - ask school to build on this next term
 - routine visit with current class plus an extra visit with familiar adult/friend
 - new teacher/teaching assistant (TA) to visit child in current class or at home. (Home visits likely to be extremely beneficial – 2e page 181).
 - slide-in new teacher/TA before end of term (SMRM2e page 180 and 196)
4. If it is not possible to meet new staff in advance, try to ensure continuity by:
 - keeping the child with a best friend
 - arranging for previous teacher/TA to spend some time with the child on their first day
 - 'borrowing' previous keyworker to hand over to new keyworker at beginning of term
 - keeping current keyworker (but beware of child becoming too dependent on one adult over a long period of time)
5. It will be helpful if new teachers/teaching assistants (TAs) can make some time for a few minutes of rapport-building with the child on a one-to-one basis during their first week in order to achieve as many of the following as seem appropriate:
 - provide the opportunity for the child to speak (this may be possible when away from the rest of the class)
 - reassure the child that they will not ask them questions or pick them for demonstrations in front of the class unless the child volunteers
 - reassure the child they will be checking they are OK, have a friend to sit with, understand the work, have been to the toilet etc.

- give the younger child confidence to respond by playing games that initially only require pointing, nodding, shaking the head etc.
 - enlist the child's help and then praise for a job well done
 - reassure older children they can contribute/ask questions by writing things down until they feel relaxed enough to talk.
 - explain that they will need to use a loud voice sometimes but this does not mean they are angry (SM children are very afraid of getting things wrong and will withdraw rather than risk being told off).
6. Foster friendships with other children as actively as possible, particularly outside school by inviting peers home to play/have tea. Try to find out in advance if there are children nearby that attend the same school/playgroup and make contact with their parents. Teachers can help by suggesting which children would make good friends and introducing parents after school if parents find it difficult to make the first move.
 7. Parents should stay with children in pre-school settings until the child is comfortable for them to leave. Do not EXPECT the child to be anxious, as this anxiety will be conveyed to the child. Parents need to stay relaxed and calm themselves and praise the child for being brave and staying on their own for longer each day. Do not delay the initial separation too long however, as it is only by facing their fear and successfully coping on their own that children will learn not to be afraid.
 8. If children are finding it hard to join in at pre-school/reception class, parents can come early and join in the last few activities/story with the child so they leave with a positive experience. Alternatively, a parent can stay for the first half an hour, joining in the activities and helping the child to integrate/make friends/build rapport with a designated adult (SMRM2e page 180). This may occasionally be necessary in Year 1/Year 2.
 9. Pupils preparing for transition to secondary school or college need to focus on developing their independence outside school and confidence in talking to strangers as much as possible during their final year, such as making phone calls, running errands, dog-walking, ordering pizza, banking birthday money, earning money car-washing and baby-sitting, going swimming, joining clubs, developing interests etc. etc. (SMRM2e page 161-166). The summer holidays are a good time for shared activities and trips with friends who will also be attending the new school/college, and for meeting new people who know nothing of the child's difficulties. Confidence grows through *achievement* and as the child becomes their own person, the seeds can be sown that a fresh start in a new educational establishment is exactly what they need. If they can talk to strangers, they will be able to talk in a new environment.

N.B. The BBC Documentary 'My Child Won't Speak' showed how Danielle changed secondary schools aged 14 and was able to speak there from day one. She knew that no-one would be surprised if she spoke as they did not know her history and that if she could just get one word out, she would not be labelled as the kid who didn't speak. Although her heart was racing, she got that one word out and went from strength to strength in her new environment. You can see this on You Tube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fm1SOoY57cE>

10. Finally, try to relax and **do not convey your own anxiety to your child!** If everyone is positive about this big step, it may be exactly the fresh start that your child needs.

SMRM2e = Selective Mutism Resource Manual, second edition, by Maggie Johnson & Alison Wintgens, 2016, a Speechmark Publication.

Sample Individual Education Plan
(transition to mainstream secondary school)

Written by secondary SENCo following meeting with parents and SLT in Term 6, prior to admission. Pupil HR had not attended primary school since end year 3 but attended full-time on reintegration. This plan was shared with all staff prior to HR's admission and a video about SM was watched and discussed.

Name: H R

Information: H has been diagnosed with selective mutism and severe social anxiety. This sometimes causes her to freeze when compelled to speak or if watched too closely by other people. The same condition often causes her to speak at barely audible volumes to some people, notably authority figures. H may become very distressed if overwhelmed by a situation. H is terrified of getting anything wrong.

Objectives:

- For H to feel positive about her return to mainstream education
- For H to participate fully in the curriculum, using non-verbal means as required

Strategies:

Do not expect H to speak, all focus should be on welcoming H into the class making her feel happy, safe, involved and that she has a valuable contribution to make to the lesson.

Do not ask direct questions of H like 'How did you do that??' but make them rhetorical, for example, 'I wonder how you did that?'. This takes any pressure away from H feeling that she has to answer your question.

Wherever possible ensure H is sat with a friend, (we will know more about her friends after the first two days of term.) H does not tend to have difficulty communicating with other children.

When instructions have been given, ask H if she understands the task or homework quietly and expect a nod or shaking head as answer. H cannot initiate conversation and will need to be given the opportunity to come back to you with her questions written down.

When starting any written task H will take longer than others because of her fear of getting it wrong. Advice on how to start or a first sentence will make this less traumatic for H, but the main thing she needs is not to feel rushed and assurance that we all make mistakes.

It is important that H has regular contact with a member of staff. Alongside her fortnightly tutor meetings with CB, she will meet with CF and KT (Senco) at least once a week.

Having said all this, do not feel you have to tip-toe around H with kid gloves. She will respond well to patience, understanding and humour like any other pupil.

Here are some tips given by selectively mute children on how you can help them:

- * They do want to talk
- * Don't pressure the child into talking
- * Be prepared for a long haul to the 'cure'.
- * Close collaboration between home and school.
- * Be encouraging, patient and positive.

For further information please see the training notes, copies of which are held in the Additional Educational Needs office or from KT.