

Supporting children who feel worried about talking

There are lots of different ways for parents, carers and familiar adults to support a child's communication skills. These ideas should be used during every day activities and during play. They can be done at home, nursery or in school.

Do not force your child to speak; this includes not encouraging them to speak by asking them to say things, such as: 'Tell granny about your new book' or 'say hello to Sarah'.

Talk **openly** about your child's worries about speaking. You could say: 'You're not the only one that finds it difficult to talk' and 'you'll be able to talk to me when you're ready'.

Make **comments** rather than asking them questions. You could say, 'I can see a bird in the tree!' instead of 'what can you see in the tree?'. Tell family and friends to do this too.

Remember the goal of any contact is to **take part**; there should be **no expectation** for your child to speak.

Reassure your child you are there to help them and not to 'make' them speak. This will make your child feel more relaxed and less worried about talking.

If your child speaks unexpectedly, **do not** react by saying things, such as 'I knew you could talk' or 'well done for talking to granny'. This will draw attention to their talking.

Prepare your child **before** they go to social events, such as birthday parties. You could say 'I know you're a bit worried about talking to people. Don't worry, you can still join in and have fun. You'll talk when you're ready'.

Do not **ask** your child why they feel this way. **Tell** them 'talking to new people can feel scary to begin with, so your words can get stuck. It's ok, you don't need to talk to join in and have fun'.

SMILE! Your child looks to you when they feel nervous. Show them you are happy and relaxed even if you do not feel that way.

Focus on **positives**. For example, look at what your child does well and their interests. Support them in their interests and encourage them to help younger children.

Please call the Speech and Language Therapy department on **01925 946686** if you have any questions.

<http://www.selectivemutism.org.uk/information/information-for-parents/#smrm><http://www.selectivemutism.org.uk/information/information-for-parents/#smrm>

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