

WHAT IS IT SELECTIVE MUTISM (SM)?

- SM is a **specific phobia** causing inability to talk in certain social situations
- It is **not a choice, manipulative behaviour, or a problem with cognition**
- Selective mutism **affects adults as well as children**
- Some manage to communicate non-verbally, others may be unable to manage any communication outside their comfort zone
- Some may manage to speak quietly, or whisper



Design by
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Pixabay (top), and Lindsey
Blake (Parental consent ✓)

SELECTIVE MUTISM

WHAT IT IS, AND HOW YOU CAN HELP

- Dr Hannah Hill,
Mum of a child with SM
and GP - @hhill1978
- Anita McKiernan,
SALT - @sltsolutions
- The hive mind of SMIRA

- Remove pressure to speak:
“I understand that talking is hard... whatever you can manage is fine.”
- Allow them to be with, and communicate through, their carer
- Have charts/diagrams/scales available as communication aids
- Make chatty, friendly comments that do not expect a response - “I really like your teddy, he looks so cute”, rather than, “What’s your teddy called?”

- Explain what you are doing, and what will happen next
- Keep questions to a minimum, and always start with yes/no questions
- Try asking questions via the carer, and let them answer their carer, rather than you



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