

Speaking Up

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SELECTIVE MUTISM (SM)

WHAT IS SM?

- Consistent failure to speak in specific social situations where there is an expectation for speaking, despite speaking in other situations
- has lasted at least 1 month
- not due to a lack of knowledge of, or comfort with, the spoken language required in the social situation OR by a communication disorder, ASD, Schizophrenia, or another psychotic disorder

SCHOOL PSYCH ROLE

- Supporting mental health needs is crucial
- Remember: SM is often first noticed in schools
- Remain up-to-date on research
- Advocate for students
- Work with teachers, Speech Pathologists, support staff, & caregivers
- Provide more focused interventions for students at-risk for SM



SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH SM

- Trainings for teachers & caregivers
- Early identification for at-risk students
- School-wide & classroom oral communication strategies
- Preparation for school readiness
- Modeling
- Group therapy



- Contingency management
- Shaping
- Stimulus fading
- Systematic desensitization
- Communication ladders
- Social skills training
- Minimizing escape & avoidance
- Teaching coping skills
- Challenging maladaptive beliefs

REMINDERS

- SM is a learned behavior
- Always accept nonverbal communication for the bathroom, illness, or food
- Give students time to speak
- Support is a gradual process
- Be consistent!
- Progress monitor!
- Engage in home-school collaboration



RESOURCE DRIVE



SMART CENTER RESOURCES



American Psychiatric Association (2013) Anxiety disorders. In Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders (5th ed.).
Bice-Urbach, B. (2023). Selective mutism: An overview for families [handout]. National Association of School Psychologists.
Cline, T., & Baldwin, S. (2004). Selective mutism in children.
Busse, R.T., & Downey, J. (2011). Selective mutism: A three-tiered approach to prevention and intervention. Contemporary School Psychology, 15, 53-63
Wilmshurst, L. A. (2018). Child and Adolescent Psychopathology: A Casebook. Fourth Edition. Sage Publication.