

Ideas for Selective Mutism

Strategies:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on reducing the anxiety in all class activities and not on getting the child to speak. (Never attempt to pressure, demand or trick a child into speaking.) |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Seat the child at the side of the class - not in front or in the middle where everyone is looking at him |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Avoid and limit eye contact at first |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Let the child know that you will help him, and will not try to force him to talk |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Talk to the child about ways they can communicate with you. Reassure them that you are not going to try to make them talk, but need to find ways to communicate, e.g. a card to let you know he wants to go to the toilet. Let them know that if they want to talk that's fine too. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide alternative means of communication - gestures, visuals, paper & pencil |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage a "buddy" system. Choose an outgoing child or there may be a child he is friendly with, seat him beside his buddy. |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't overly respond when the child does or doesn't speak |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourage peers to be friendly and include him in all activities |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enlist the help of parents/carers |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Provide consistent encouragement, support and reassurance |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• "Sliding in" is where a child is put into a safe environment with someone whom they feel at ease and can communicate with.....gradually another person is introduced . This process may take a long time and requires patience |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 'Shaping' refers to taking gradual step to increase the behaviour that is required. This is done by shaping either the setting (e.g. sliding in a new person) or volume of speech (e.g. going from whispering to a one word answer). |

Reference: The Selective Mutism Resource Manual by Maggie Johnson and Alison Wintergens
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