

## An advice sheet for parents, teachers and carers of children who have selective mutism

### WHAT TO SAY WHEN ...

#### ... other people need a quick explanation (do this in private)

"Selective mutism is an anxiety disorder – if we do nothing or treat it like a behaviour problem, the anxiety will get worse."

"No, it's not shyness, more like stage fright. She literally freezes up and can't get a word out at times."

"Selective mutism is a phobia of talking to anyone outside your comfort zone. It's the same as a phobia of cats or eating certain foods – even though there's nothing to be scared of, you just get this awful feeling of panic."

#### ... people make unhelpful comments in front of the child

Step in quickly and play down unhelpful comments and questions as in the following examples. Show that you are not concerned and quickly move on to another topic. If appropriate, arrange to speak to the individuals concerned later, to explain how they can help the child or young person in future.

#### ... adults put pressure on the child to speak

If adults make comments such as:

"Are you going to speak to me today?"

"Has the cat got your tongue?"

"What's the matter – is something wrong?"

Say something like:

"You'll have to wait and see, won't you?!"

(To [N], referring to the comment) "That's a funny thing to say, isn't it?!"

"[N]'s doing really well. We're all very happy with how she's doing."

"Nothing's wrong. [N]'s enjoying listening, aren't you?"

#### ... other children ask why the child who has selective mutism doesn't talk

"[N] will talk as soon as she feels ready, won't you [N]?"

"[N] hasn't found his voice in school yet but, when he does, we won't make a fuss. We'll talk to him as if he's always spoken."

"Some of us find it hard to speak when there are lots of people around. It'll be easier when just the two of you work or play together."

"[N]'s working on it. You can be a good friend and just wait for it to happen."

[N] is the name of the child or young person who has selective mutism

**... other children tell you the child can't talk**

"[N] is really good at talking at home and if we all help by being patient, she'll be able to talk here too, isn't that right [N]?"

"[N] talks lots at home, and he's working hard on talking here too"

"If you're lucky you might be the first person [N] talks to at school. But it won't be you if you keep saying that!"

"Of course she can, but right now you prefer to listen and think, don't you [N]?"

**... other children speak for the child**

If children pass on a message from the child openly accept this to gradually enable [N] to speak to friend(s) in front of you.

"Thank you, I'll check with [N] that I've got the message right."

"Is that right, [N]?" ([N] confirms by nodding or shaking their head.)

(Use friend as a go-between) "Can you ask [N] who he'd like to sit with?"

If children answer for the child, make it clear that you were not talking to them!

"It's OK, [N] knows how to answer. He can point/show me/nod/shake his head."

**... the child puts up their hand in class to answer or is asked a question**

Smile and wait five seconds. If no answer comes, calmly move the conversation on:

"Well done, I can see you know the answer! Who else wants to have a go?"

"That's OK, jot it down/show me later/tell Danny what you were going to say."

"Let [N] have a think about that." (Explain privately that [N]'s not ready for direct questions.)

**... the child speaks for the first time and/or other children comment on this**

Respond to what [N] says as if they have always spoken (ie no direct praise):

"Great idea"; "That sounds fun"; "Yes let's do that"; "Good answer!"

"We always knew [N] would feel like talking one day."

"That's great – and what have you managed to do today?"

**... you cannot hear what the child says**

If you are alone with [N], say you're sorry you didn't hear, rather than ask [N] to repeat or speak up. But don't draw attention to this in public. Thank [N] for the contribution and, if necessary, seek clarification later on a one-to-one basis.

**... people expect the child to say 'Hello', 'Goodbye', 'Please' or 'Thank you'**

Smile and calmly move the conversation on. Social conventions are the hardest thing for children who have SM to accomplish and are not a priority. If appropriate, explain later in private that the child was not being rude.

**Note:** these are just examples which can be adapted for individual children, depending on their age and different situations – you will be able to think of more!  
The last example in each group is generally more suitable for older children.

## An advice sheet for parents of children who have selective mutism

# DO I ANSWER FOR MY CHILD?

The short answer is 'No!'

It's natural to step in when your child freezes after being asked a question. But if they get used to someone answering for them, they will adopt the role of silent partner whenever that person is around. One day, your child *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:

**Don't answer for your child.** If you adopt the routine overleaf, 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 will be far less wary of social situations in general.

**Don't 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.

**Don't apologise for your child.** They'll feel they've done something wrong. If appropriate, you can explain to the person 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 for the long answer ...

Follow the routine overleaf 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. If your child speaks very quietly, don't ask them to speak louder. Ask the person waiting for an answer, 'Did you get that?' They will often take a guess and your child can then nod or shake their head. And remember - although you are not going to answer for your child again, it's fine for you to repeat what they say!

*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 the explanation below.

**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!



- 1 **Wait** for a full five seconds (slowly count to five).

*If your child nods or shakes their head for 'yes/no', that's fine. Add a comment to move the conversation on, eg '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 there is 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 five seconds. Face your child, so they can't whisper in your ear.

*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 there is no response, **move the conversation on** without answering, eg:

- ★ 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.

**WAIT** ⇒ **REPEAT/REPHRASE** ⇒ **WAIT** ⇒ **MOVE ON**

## An advice sheet for parents of children who have selective mutism

# EASING IN FRIENDS AND RELATIVES

### An informal approach to building rapport and facilitating speech

Do you have a family friend or relative who your child sees on a fairly regular basis but is unable to speak to?

Try these six steps at home, over several sessions or over a few hours.

C = child (or young person)    P = parent    F = familiar adult

Whenever C speaks, P and F must not draw attention to this fact, but calmly respond to *what* C says as if they've always spoken.

### 1 Educate the familiar adult

Talk privately to F to ensure they understand the nature of selective mutism and accept that it is a phobia which needs sympathetic support to overcome. You need to agree:

- ★ C is not being rude, difficult or silly. Their silence is caused by anxiety, like stage-fright, so no one must take it personally.
- ★ No one will put pressure on C to talk – no bribery, persuasion, negative comments or expectation to say 'Hello', 'Please', 'Thank you', etc.
- ★ It will help C to talk in F's presence if F initially avoids watching C while C is talking or trying to talk.

### 2 Reassure the child

Before F arrives, tell C that F does not expect C to talk to them unless they want to. They just want to have a nice time chatting to P and possibly joining in whatever C is doing or wants to show them. Set up C with a practical activity they enjoy. Tell C they can chat to you as normal *and F will not butt in or make any comments about them talking*. Remind them that if they want to be brave and have a go at talking to F, that's fine, but it's up to them and F won't be upset if they don't.

### 3 Be comfortable in the same space

The first step is for C to feel comfortable around F, so stick with this stage until C appears fairly relaxed and is moving and smiling easily.

- ★ F greets C but does not ask any questions. F can make positive comments about C (eg admire a picture they have drawn) but, initially, their focus should be on light-hearted chat with P.

- ★ P should give F more attention than C initially, to let C physically relax in the same room at their own pace. At this point, young children will very often dip in and out of the room, as if they are testing the water.
- ★ P includes C by making casual comments that don't require an answer (eg 'We had a great time at the zoo, didn't we?'), and distracts C with physical activity, such as handing out biscuits, drawing a picture, finding their model collection or decorating cupcakes.
- ★ P can ease C in gently by asking C 'yes/no' questions which C can answer non-verbally by nodding or shaking their head.
- ★ However ...

If C uses gesture to try to tell P something (eg looks at the biscuit tin) *P can respond if it's obvious what C means* (eg 'Yes, you can have one and offer F one too'). However, if this is not what C meant, or if C's gesture is unclear, *don't try to guess what C means*. This creates a tension which is in conflict with the calm atmosphere you are trying to create. It also reduces C's incentive to talk! P can calmly say, 'Sorry, I'm not sure what you mean. Tell me in a little while' or ask C an 'X or Y?' question (see below).

- ★ If C tries to pull P out of the room, P says, 'Don't pull me, I'm talking to F'. Then distract C, eg: 'Why don't you go and get your \_\_\_\_?'; 'Shall we look in the oven and see if the cakes are ready?'; 'Could you go and pick me some mint leaves please?'
- Stay calm and stick with it. After 10 minutes in the room with F, C's anxiety will have dropped considerably!*

#### 4(a) Talking to parent in front of familiar adult

Once relaxed in F's presence, the next goal is for C to talk to P *face-to-face* with F in the same room. (Whispering in P's ear is not an option!)

- ★ P starts to ask C questions that cannot be answered 'Yes' or 'No', so C can no longer just nod or shake their head. Initially, 'X or Y?' questions are best, eg: 'Do you want cola or juice?' **Wait** for an answer (at least 5 seconds) while F looks away and stirs their tea, studies the newspaper, looks in their bag for a tissue, etc.
- ★ If there is no answer, and there were more than two choices, add 'Or something else?' **Wait** for an answer.
- ★ If there is no answer, P offers no more choices. P smiles and says 'Tell me in a little while' and carries on talking to F.
- ★ If C wants to whisper in P's ear, or looks on the verge of speaking, P maintains eye contact with C and says, 'It's OK to talk with F here'. Smile and **wait** for an answer (at least 5 seconds).

- ★ If this isn't working, P says, 'You can tell me while F \_\_\_\_\_' (eg checks their phone messages, or makes a drink, or gets on with the crossword puzzle). This enables F to appear uninterested while P repeats the sequence.
- ★ C may speak in a very quiet voice, which is fine. Don't ask C to repeat because their voice will get louder as they relax.
- ★ C may feel more comfortable talking in the doorway at first, rather than in the room; again, this is fine. They will come closer of their own accord.
- ★ Once C is answering 'X or Y?' questions, P moves on to simple questions that can be answered in a few words; eg 'What?', 'Who?', 'Which?', 'Where?', 'When?'.  
**Wait** for an answer (at least 5 seconds).
- ★ If no answer, P prompts C by offering an alternative 'X or Y?' question; (eg 'Was it Daddy or Uncle Pete?') and works through the 'X or Y?' sequence above.

#### 4(b) Interacting with familiar adult

A simultaneous goal is for C to interact non-verbally with F, using eye contact, relaxed facial expressions and gesture:

- ★ F shows interest in what C is doing or shares an activity. F chats away *without expecting an answer* in the style of a running commentary, leaving pauses so that C can comment if they feel ready, eg: 'You're cutting out some really good shapes!'; 'I wonder if that's a flower? Or maybe it's a star ...'. As C relaxes, F asks occasional questions which C can answer by nodding or shaking their head.

#### 5 Talking to familiar adult

When C can talk to P in front of F (4a), and engage with F non-verbally (4b), and is happy, relaxed and occupied, the goal is for C to answer F.

- ★ F directs occasional questions *via* P, eg 'Wow, where did C get this?' P repeats the question, or rephrases it as an 'X or Y?' choice, so that C can answer P rather than F. Then P tells F the answer. After a few successes, C may respond without waiting for P to repeat or rephrase the question.
- ★ F occasionally asks C questions by providing an alternative 'X or Y?' question, eg: 'C, I've forgotten your cat's name. Is it Lucky or Licky?' (it may help to be a bit silly!); or 'Which level shall we do now, C – two or three?' It helps to include C's name, so that C does not wait for P to answer, and to remind P not to answer inadvertently for C.
- ★ **Wait.** Allow plenty of time for C to answer (at least 5 seconds) but don't stare at C and don't worry if C doesn't answer.
- ★ If no answer, F smiles and calmly moves on, saying something like 'I think it must be Licky because she's got a nice pink tongue' or 'I expect I'll remember soon' or 'How about I choose then?'. Then F focuses on the activity, or talking to P for a while, before trying again.

- ★ Alternatively, P repeats or rephrases the question as above, but never actually answers the question for C.
- ★ F repeats with more 'X or Y?' questions. After C has answered a couple of times, take a break; such a massive achievement can be exhausting for C.
- ★ When C can answer 'X or Y?' questions easily, F asks 'Wh \_\_\_?' questions, eg 'What colour is your rabbit?':
  - 'What?', 'Who?', 'Which?', 'How old/many?' questions are best initially because they can usually be answered with single words.
  - 'Where?' and 'When?' are good for short phrases.
  - 'How did?' and 'Why?' questions should be avoided until later because these questions often require more explanation than C can manage initially.
  - Be aware that 'Which?' can often be answered by pointing.
- ★ If there is no answer, F prompts C by falling back on an 'X or Y?' question, eg 'Do they sleep outside or indoors?' **Wait** for an answer.
- ★ Natural conversation should follow if F shows an interest: eg by helping to clean out the rabbit hutch or asking C to show them how a phone app works. Structured games and problem-solving activities are another good way to help conversation along.

## 6 Talking to familiar adult alone

The final step is for C to talk to F without the comfort of P's presence.

- ★ As soon as C appears to be comfortable with F, P should withdraw for short periods, so that C and F are engaged in an activity without P. P can stay in the room but needs to concentrate on something else.
- ★ Once C can talk to F, P must make excuses to leave the room for a while, so that C does not have time to associate talking to F with P's presence.
- ★ On subsequent visits, P should always be present initially but leave sooner, and for longer, until all of C's anxiety around talking to F has subsided.

### Good luck!

<p><b>Parents – practise and memorise this sequence!</b></p>	<p>Say 'It's OK to talk ...' or ask a question.</p> <p><b>Wait</b> for C to speak ... <i>If no response ...</i></p> <p>Rephrase question with an alternative, 'X or Y?'</p> <p><b>Wait</b> ... <i>If no response ...</i></p> <p>Move on.</p>
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WAIT ⇒ REPHRASE 'X or Y?' ⇒ WAIT ⇒ MOVE ON



<b>Familiar adults – gradually increase the complexity of questions</b>	EASIEST
	<p>‘Yes/no’ questions that can be answered by <b>nodding or shaking head</b></p>
	<p>Questions that can be answered by <b>pointing</b>, eg ‘Which one?’, ‘Can you show me?’</p>
	<p>‘X or Y?’ questions for <b>one-word</b> answers</p>
	<p>‘What?’, ‘Who?’, ‘Where?’, ‘When?’ for <b>short answers</b></p>
	<p><b>Reasoning</b> questions, eg ‘Why?’, ‘How come?’, ‘What’s the difference ...?’, ‘Can you explain ...?’</p>
	<p><b>Personal</b> questions, eg ‘How do you feel about ...?’, ‘What do you make of that?’</p>
	HARDEST

**Why does this work?** Your child will be helped to face and overcome their fear through:

- ★ **relaxation** –there’s no need for them to talk, until they feel ready
- ★ **confidence**– you convey your belief that they will succeed
- ★ **expectation**– you remove their need and opportunity for avoidance strategies
- ★ **a systematic progression**– your child takes tiny steps towards talking, and is only eased towards the next step when they are relaxed and ready.

## 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><b>Practise and memorise this sequence!</b></p>	<p>If C wants to whisper, say 'It's OK to talk here'.</p> <p><b>Wait</b> 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><b>Wait</b> ... <i>If no response ...</i></p> <p>Move on or move away. <b>Don't guess!</b></p>
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WAIT    ⇒    REPHRASE 'X or Y?'    ⇒    WAIT    ⇒    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.