



SpeechWise

Selective Mutism - How can you help?

It's **essential to reduce all pressure on the child to talk**. Everyone who interacts with them: family, school staff, club leaders etc should understand this. At the same time, you still want to involve the child in activities. **Commentary style talk** is a great way to do this.

What is Commentary Style Talk?

In commentary style talk, the adult does most of the talking, and there are no direct questions to the child. Think of it as talking aloud to yourself while the child observes.



You can:

- Give instructions: "Can you pass the scissors please?"
- Make chatty comments: "What a lovely day it is outside."
- Use rhetorical/tag questions (that don't need an answer): "That looks good, doesn't it?"
- Use openers such as: "I wonder...", "I bet..."
- Ask yourself questions: "I wonder where this goes?"
- Pause - some silence is completely okay



Why it Works

As children realise that you are not fazed by their silence, they will hopefully begin to relax. They may react with smiles, nods, or other small gestures - all signs of engagement.



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Tips for Commentary Style Talk

- **Occasional gentle questions:** Try one, then move on if the child doesn't answer.
- **Don't fear silence:** Pausing is good - avoid looking at the child while pausing to reduce pressure.
- **Pair talk with activities:** Sorting papers, tidying, or small tasks keeps interaction natural.
- **Use positive body language:** Smile, nod, or gesture while talking.
- **Keep language calm/natural:** Friendly tone, not "teaching mode."
- **Encourage parallel play:** Children can participate silently alongside you.
- **Start small:** Begin with short periods and gradually extend as comfort grows.
- **Be patient and enjoy their company** - genuine engagement matters more than speech.



Remember: every small step counts, and your calm, patient presence is the most powerful support you can give. If you ever need guidance or support, please don't hesitate to contact us at *Speechwise Therapy*.