

Selective Mutism

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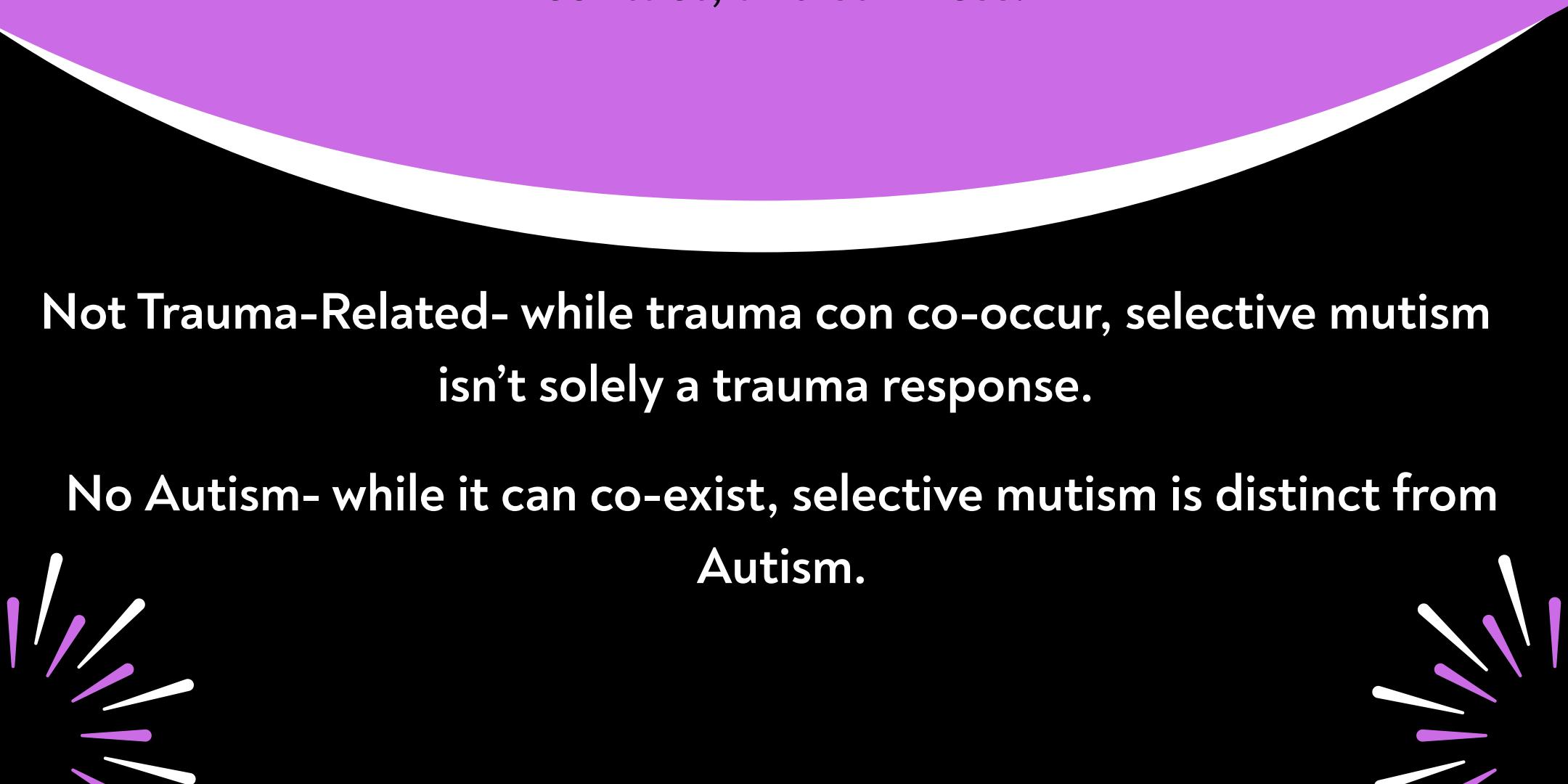
School Accommodations



Selective Mutism is an anxiety disorder where a person consistently fails to speak in specific social situations (school) despite being able to talk freely at home.

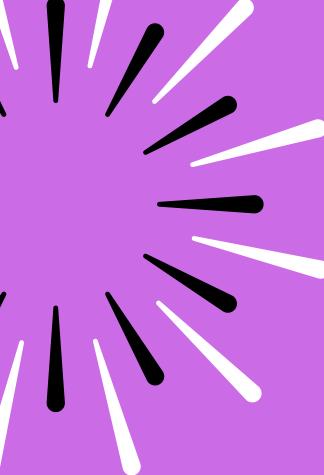
It is not defiance or shyness but an inability to speak by overwhelming fear and anxiety.

Presenting physical signs like freezing up, poor eye contact, and stiffness.



Not Trauma-Related- while trauma can co-occur, selective mutism isn't solely a trauma response.

No Autism- while it can co-exist, selective mutism is distinct from Autism.



Selective Mutism can affect school performance, social development, and can lead to bullying.

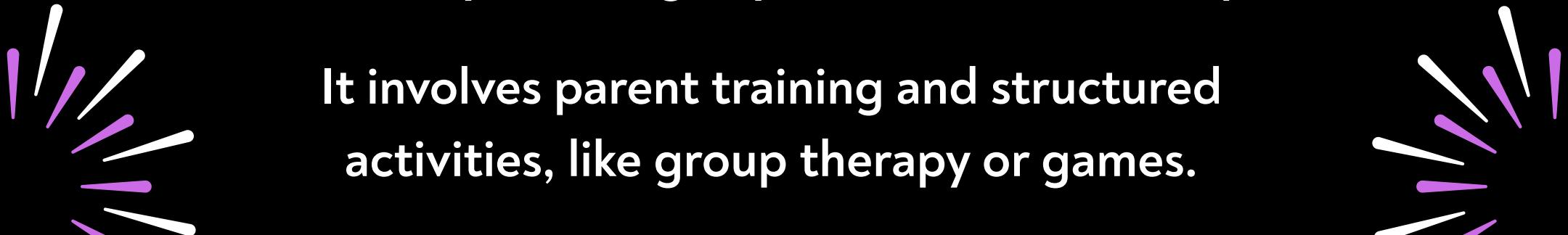


Treatment at school often requires support plans such as a 504.

Promoting Classroom Comfort and Engagement

According to Selective Mutism Association, the school should identify a person responsible for “brave talking”.

What is brave talking?



A technique where children gradually practice speaking in increasingly challenging situations within a supportive, positive environment, using small goals, role-playing, and rewards to build confidence and overcome anxiety, treating any vocalization as a step forward.

It involves parent training and structured activities, like group therapy or games.

Key Characteristics of Brave Talking



Gradual Exposure- small achievable goals, whispering to a parent, then counselor, then peer.

Positive Reinforcement- every effort of speech, even a nod is praised as brave, reinforcing the behavior.

Safe Settings- controlled environments.

Parent Involvement- parents learn the same skills, supporting them in public places.

Fun Activities- games, songs, small group work.

DO NOT

Force speech, it's never pressured, it's about empowering the child.

And Do Not

Overlook non-verbal speech such as eye contact, smiling, handing over something, these count as brave too.

More Accommodations



Preferential Seating- maybe near a friend away from distractions.
And the buddy system.

Alternative Speaking- allow recording answers or presenting to the teacher privately instead of the class.

Written responses, nonverbal classroom jobs, and award points for any participation.

A home/school communication log should be developed to provide the parents with updates about participation in activates, with teachers, and with peers.

Modifying Exams- the student should not be punished or criticized for lack of speech.

Preparing for Transitions

Identify a new point person early and have meetings with the current point person to help transfer speech. Have these meetings prior to summer vacation.

If possible, the student will meet their new teacher prior to the end of the school year.



There is a free online training provided by the Selective Mutism Learning University. It's for teachers and parents!