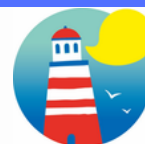


Supporting A Child Who Is A Reluctant Speaker



Seaside SaLT
Speech and language therapy

A 'reluctant speaker' is a term used to describe those children who can talk comfortably in some situations, but are silent in other situations.

If a child is a reluctant speaker they often have developing or appropriate expressive language skills but can be reluctant to use these in specific situations

Some children will use more language at home and be reluctant at pre-school / school or in different environments like their house compared to a relative's house.

Children who are reluctant to talk will need lots of help and support to feel confident and happy to communicate with other children and adults.

For some children, they are reluctant to speak because they are worried about talking. It is important to remember that your child wants to talk, but their anxiety stops them.

Advice for supporting children who find talking difficult with certain people, or in certain situations include :

- Accept that your child wants to speak, despite their silence, and are not being stubborn or deliberate.
- Do not resort to bribery, flattery, challenge, threats or gentle persuasion to elicit speech. This will increase anxiety.
- Openly acknowledge the child's problem in an accepting and relaxed way, while stressing that the situation is only temporary.
- Encourage communication in a relaxing atmosphere, with no pressure on the child to speak.
- Accept the child's efforts to communicate in a non-verbal way, such as when they use pointing.
- Praise any form of communication and participation in activities. □ Follow the child's lead. You may notice that your child is more talkative during certain tasks or activities.
- Provide extra time for your child to produce a response □
- Limit the amount of direct questions and make statements/comments about what the child is doing instead. For example, instead of saying 'What did you have for dinner?' say 'I thought the stew was great today'. This will reduce the pressure of answering a question and reduce anxiety.
- Responding consistently to the child in the above way will help them to become a confident talker.