

# CHATTY AT HOME, SILENT AT SCHOOL?



It can come as a surprise to learn that your bright, talkative child does not speak at all in other environments. This is a tell-tale sign of **selective mutism** - a little known anxiety disorder that prevents sufferers from speaking in select situations no matter how much they long to.

If you are concerned that your child may be **more than shy**, it is possible that they are suffering from a symptom of anxiety that literally freezes their vocal chords. Children with **selective mutism** often want to speak, but they physically cannot.

Join our active, online community to learn more:



[www.selectivemutism.org.nz](http://www.selectivemutism.org.nz)

If you recognise any of the following symptoms in your child, it is possible that they may be experiencing **selective mutism**:

- Speaks freely and fluently in their **comfort zone**.
- Literally **cannot** speak in other, select situations.
- May speak to **some people** but not others.
- May **avoid eye contact** and wear a blank expression.

It is generally believed that **selective mutism** symptoms are driven by anxiety, and they usually have no obvious cause. This condition is not shyness and rarely goes away without support. Some people suffer more noticeably than others, but if left to its own devices the symptoms usually worsen.

A **gentle approach** and early intervention can work wonders, as this helps to slowly expand the child's **comfort zone**.

**Selective mutism** is relatively rare, and is reported to affect up to 1% of children. If you would like to learn more about **selective mutism**, or connect with other families, please visit our website:

[www.selectivemutism.org.nz](http://www.selectivemutism.org.nz)

