Selective Mutism Fact Sheet

What is Selective Mutism

Selective mutism is an anxiety disorder.

A person with Selective Mutism can speak but they find it hard or impossible to speak in certain situations.

Someone might:

- Talk normally at home but find it hard to talk at school
- Be able to speak to one person but not another
- Want to speak but feel unable to get the words out
- It is not a choice – the person is not being rude, stubborn or deliberately ignoring you.



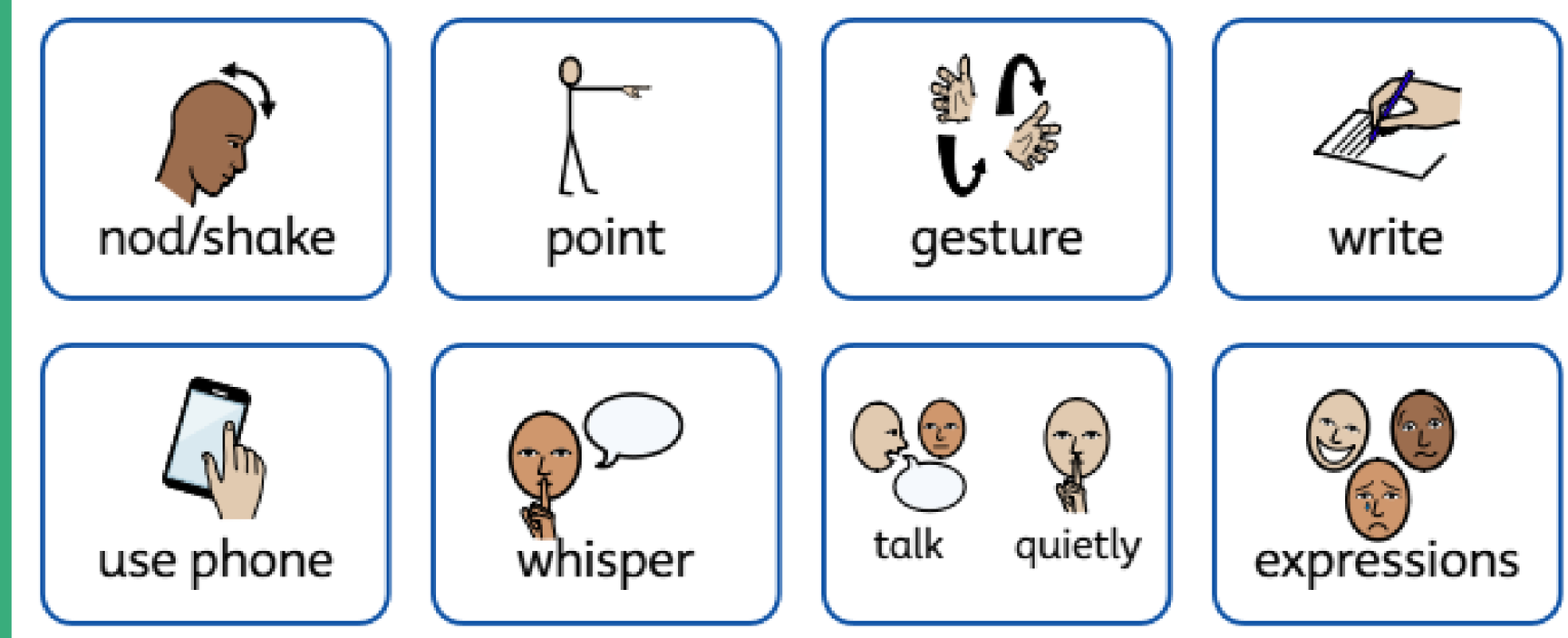
What makes it harder

- Being asked to speak in front of people
- Being suddenly asked a question
- Being told to “use your voice”
- Being pressurised to talk

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Someone with Selective Mutism may communicate in different ways



What can help

- Reduce pressure to talk
- Accept other ways of communicating
- Let them communicate in their own time
- Make the environment feel safe and predictable



Remember

- Selective mutism is not a choice
- Sometimes they may feel like their words are “stuck”
- Being unable to speak does not mean they have nothing to say
- Patience and understanding can make a big difference

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