



Common Characteristics of Children With Selective Mutism

Temperament and Personality Characteristics

- Inhibited/Timid
- Perfectionist
- Hypersensitive
- Aggressive
- Avoidant/Withdrawn
- Controlling/Inflexible
- Oppositional
- Anxious
- Fearful of new places, people, and things
- Creative
- Empathic
- Discerning/Perceptive

Behaviors

Physical

- frozen expression with lack of eye contact
- tense and stiff body movements
- fidgets, bites nails, twirls hair, picks skin, chews on things
- does not raise hand or point
- unable to hand over or take an object from another person
- shuts down when new people approach
- unable to eat in front of others
- can't use public restrooms or ask to use the toilet
- unable to perform in front of others
- acts extremely silly or wound up in front of new people or in new places
- has frequent and intense tantrums

Communication

- uses gestures in place of speech
- can't initiate play or ask an adult for help
- unable to express and display emotions such as happy, sad, angry, scared, confused
- unable to demonstrate knowledge on tests (both written and oral)



- has difficulty expressing self through music, art, writing
- lacks social skills

Sensory

- unable to tolerate certain textures, sounds, touch
- picky eater
- has difficulty with transitions and resists change
- unable to follow directions

Avoidance

- unable to join in group activities
- hides behind parent
- turns head or body away from others
- ignores requests
- refuses to go to school or participate in social activities
- ignores family and friends in certain situations
- refuses to have photos taken

Somatic symptoms

- stomach aches
- headaches
- pain
- fatigue

Comorbid Conditions

- Speech and language delays
- Bilingual
- Sensory processing disorder
- Separation anxiety
- Panic disorder
- Generalized anxiety disorder
- Specific phobias
- Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
- Hoarding
- Depression
- Autism spectrum disorder (although this is impossible according to the DSM-5 criteria, there are some children with ASD that also have symptoms of SM)