Climbing the Ladder: Practicing Brave Talking
Laura Kirmayer, PhD, MSW
Director of Brave Buddies
Child Mind Institute
Founded in 2009

The only independent nonprofit organization exclusively dedicated to transforming mental health care for children everywhere.

To help children reach their full potential we must:
• Develop more effective treatments for childhood psychiatric and learning disorders.
• Empower children, families and teachers with the scientifically sound information they need.
• Build the science of healthy brain development.

The Child Mind Institute does not accept funding from the pharmaceutical industry.

“The Child Mind Institute dares to imagine a world where no child suffers from mental illness.”
-Brooke Garber Neidich, Chair, Child Mind Institute
Upcoming Events

Behavioral and Emotional Skills Training
A one-day training for caregivers and parents to teach practical techniques for effective behavior management.
Friday, February 26, 2016
9:00 AM – 4:00PM

Coexisting Disorders in Children with SM: How to Differentiate Symptoms and Navigate Behaviors
Presented by Laura Kirmayer, PhD, MSW, and Michelle Kaplan, LCSW
Wednesday, March 16, 2016
6:15 PM – 7:30 PM

A Team Approach: Collaboration and Coordination with Schools
Presented by Janine Domingues, PhD
Wednesday, April 13, 2016
6:15 PM – 7:30 PM
Outline for Our Time Together

• Selective Mutism: 101 *Abbreviated*
• Building Brave Muscles *Abbreviated*
• Climbing the Ladder: Targeted Practice
• Take it on the Road: Daily Practice
• Questions and Discussion
SELECTIVE MUTISM: 101 ABBREVIATED
(Watch SM 101 from October 17th, 2015)
What is Selective Mutism (SM)?

• The inability to verbalize in specific social situations when speaking is expected (e.g. school, extra-curricular activities, play dates) despite the ability to verbalize fluently in other situations (e.g. home)

• Causes Impairment

• Duration for at least 1 month, not including the 1st month of school
Current Conceptualization of Selective Mutism

Nature *and* Nurture
Nature

Genetic Predisposition

ANXIETY

ANXIETY
Nurture

The Environment's Role in Shaping the Inhibited Stance
Our treatment is a behavioral approach that focuses on the environment’s role in shaping the inhibited stance.

*Environment: Anyone (parent, teacher, peer, stranger) prompting the child to engage verbally and/or behaviorally
Environments Role in Shaping the Inhibited Stance

Environment Observes Distress

Environment Has Empathic Response

Every One Feels Relief

Child Experiences Distress & Inhibits

Child is Prompted to Engage Verbally or Behaviorally

Negative Reinforcement
EFFECTIVE TREATMENT
Treatment Goals

• Develop the child’s capacity to manage anxiety related to speaking so that the child is able to overcome its impact (Building Brave Muscles)

• Increase number of people, settings and activities in which the child speaks responsively and spontaneously (Climbing the Ladder)

• Diminish anxiety
Treatment Approach

- Behavioral Therapy (BT) or Combined BT & Medication
- Not Treatment As Usual (‘TAU’)
  - Intensive dose to build momentum
  - Targets generalization
- Team Approach
  - Parents, teachers, caregivers
- Simultaneous Treatment Trajectories
  - Caregivers Skills Training and Acquisition
  - Child’s Individual Trajectory
  - School Intervention Plan
  - Ongoing Assessment
Crucial Components of Effective Treatment

• Psychoeducation
• ‘Environments’ Distress Tolerance
• Consistent Daily Dose
• Graduated and Systematic
Psychoeducation

• This includes the child, parents, teachers and even friends and friends parents, store clerks and doormen!

• Treatment is transparent* and collaborative. We need everyone on board.

• Really important to debunk the myths that may interfere with how we approach the child and the anxiety
Distress Tolerance

- Build the environments awareness of their own distress and their response to distress

- Natural instinct is to help a child in distress
Daily Dose that Stays Graduated and Systematic

• Think about how you learn any new behavior…
  ▪ Learning how to read
  ▪ Learning a new language

• Time and repetition
TREATMENT PLAN
We Start By Creating A Talking Map

Create one as we run through the next slides…
Rigid Rules

• Kids with SM divide the world into those they talk with and those they don’t
• Boundaries are not fluid
• Multiple variables influence these boundaries: People, Places and Activities
People, Places, and Activities

• Unique variations from child to child
• Treatment needs to be individualized to these variations
  ▪ Same goal and same approach, but different starting points and different sized steps
### Talking Map

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>Grandma's House</th>
<th>Gymnastics</th>
<th>Soccer</th>
<th>Store</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Main Classroom</td>
<td>Gym</td>
<td>Art</td>
<td>Music</td>
<td>Science</td>
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<td>Mom</td>
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<td>Aunt Susie</td>
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<td>Grandma</td>
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<td>Store Clerks</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strangers</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Our goal is to fill this Talking Map with as many X’s as possible. An X represents the child’s ability to verbalize to this person, in this setting and/or activity.
The Contamination Effect
REMEMBER:
Graduated and Systematic

Put the Map Aside
and focus on
Skills Mastery
BUILDING BRAVE MUSCLES ABBREVIATED

(Watch Building Brave Muscles Workshop from November 18, 2015)
Adaptation of Parent Child Interaction Therapy (PCIT) for Selective Mutism

• PCIT is an empirically supported treatment for *young* children with disruptive behavior disorders

• Adaptations have been developed for many populations outside of DBD

• Dr. Steven Kurtz developed the adaptation of PCIT for Selective Mutism
SM Behavioral Skill Modules

- Child Directed Interaction (CDI)
  - Reward/ Reinforcement
- Verbalization Directed Interaction (VDI)
  - Exposure/ Approach Task
  - Effective sequences when prompting child to speak
- Fade-in
  - Passing the ‘talking baton’
  - Generalization
- Targeted Exposures
  - Climbing the Ladder(s)
NO QUESTIONS PLEASE!

Remove the expectation to speak and build a comfort level
Child Directed Interaction (CDI) PRIDE Skills

- Praise - Labeled Praise (LP)
- Reflect (RF)
- Imitate
- Describe - Behavior Descriptions (BD)
- Enthusiasm

****AVOID
- Questions, commands, criticism, sarcasm
AVOID MINDREADING!!!

Pull for the Narrative through Behavior Descriptions!
ANY Verbalization in CDI...

REFLECT and
Labeled PRAISE IT!
Daily Skill Practice

• 5 minutes daily
  ▪ 10 behavioral descriptions
  ▪ 10 labeled praise
  ▪ reflect ALL verbalizations (if any)
  ▪ 0 questions
  ▪ 0 commands to verbalize
  ▪ **0 mindreading
Gradually and Systematically

- Sensitize child to our presence with the CDI skill set
- Graduate the child to verbalize in our presence by systematically integrating the VDI skill set into CDI
Verbalization Directed Interactions (VDI)

Providing the child with opportunities to build brave muscles

The PLANNED and INTENTIONAL use of prompts for verbalizations in a graduated and systematic approach

Providing opportunities for the child to practice approaching instead of avoiding or becoming inhibited

VDI *always* follows warm-up with CDI and is *never* used alone. It is a CDI/VDI dance!

(CDI and VDI are integrated together)
Effective VDI Sequence

Forced Choice or Open Ended Question or Direct Command for Verbalization

- Verbal Response
- No Response
- Nonverbal Response
Effective VDI Sequence

Forced Choice or Open Ended Question or Direct Verbal Command or Prompt for Verbalization

- Verbal Response
  - Reflection and Labeled Praise
- No Response
  - Wait 5 seconds and Reform or Repeat Question
- Nonverbal Response
  - Behavior Describe and Neutral Prompt for Verbal response

No response/ nonverbal

- Wait 5 seconds and “Plan B”
- Reflection and Labeled Praise

Verbal Response
Daily Skill Practice

• Pacing of CDI with VDI when NOT inhibited
• Pacing of Transition from CDI into CDI/VDI
• Integrate play into practice
Games that Elicit Verbalizations (when in VDI!)

- Go Fish
- Zingo
- Hangman
- Headbandz
- Guess Who
- Surveys of Favorites
- Spot It
- Tell Tale
Daily Homework (so far…)

• Attend to the cycle: awareness is crucial first step
• Monitor your use of questions or prompts to verbalize
• Practice CDI and CDI/VDI 5 minutes daily to gain mastery and to acclimate
  ▪ Needs to become fluid, like a second language
• Establish several games or activities that your child enjoys and that promote the skills
Climbing the Ladder: Targeted Practice
How to Get Started

• Practice the skills 5 minutes daily to gain mastery
  ▪ Needs to become fluid, like a second language

• Refer to the map we created and establish the first target

• Select planned and intentional situations to begin using the skills in a TARGETED PRACTICE
Targeted Practice

• Exposure: An exposure is an *Approach Task* that helps the child successfully encounter or experience the very thing that they have been avoiding

• Success- oriented

• Repetition-Consistency-Momentum
Initial Targets

• Remember the INITIAL goal is to increase the number of **people, places and activities** that the child can successfully verbalize across

• Target ONE variable at a time until momentum builds

• Initial targets do NOT address: Volume, Voice characteristics, latency, number of word utterances, eye contact, body language….OR behaviors!*
Example of A Targeted Practice: The Fade In...

- No expectation to speak (no questions)
- Speak to parent in our presence
- Speak to us with parent in the room
- Speak to us with parent no longer in the room

Once successfully faded in...repetition and building momentum before next target!
Pause to discuss…

Accommodation Versus Enabling
Accommodate versus Enable

• Graduated and systematic process with repetition/rehearsal for mastery

• Place temporary accommodations in place until mastery is achieved

• Once mastery has been acquired and accommodations are no longer necessary… avoid ENABLING!
Examples of Accommodating versus Enabling

• Child has never verbally participated in Morning Meeting, but behaviorally engages fully
  ▪ Prompt child to participate non-verbally: “Come up to the board and point to what month it is”
    “You pointed to January”
• Target ability to verbalize in morning meeting (Targeted Practice Plan)
  ▪ Once child has successfully mastered verbalizing in morning meeting a prompt for non-verbal participation is ENABLING
Examples of Accommodating versus Enabling

- Child has never verbally greeted others (hello), but will wave
  - Prompt child to wave
  - “Wave hello to Laura” : ACCOMMODATION

- Child has never asked to use the bathroom in school
  - Provide child with option to flip over a card to signal the need to use the bathroom : ACCOMMODATION
Back to Targeted Practice…

Keeping accommodation versus enabling in mind
Targeted Practice Example

Counselor: We are going to have a treat today. We are going to get ice cream. Do you want chocolate, vanilla, or something else?
Child: Chocolate.
Counselor: Chocolate! Thanks for telling me. Do you want it in a cup or a cone?
Child: A cone
Counselor: Great job telling me you chocolate ice cream in a cone. So when we get to store the person will ask say, “What can I get you?” What would you say back to him?
Child: Chocolate ice cream
Counselor: Did you want it in a cup or cone?
Child: A cone
Counselor: Great job ordering your ice cream. Let’s try again!
Pause to discuss...

DEGREES OF TRANSPARENCY
Examples of Degrees of Transparency

• Playing Spot it with Child in the classroom as the teacher walks in and out
• Playing I spy around the hallways of the school
• Playing Brave Bingo or Favorites
• Planning a specific target with child…Show and Tell
Back to Targeted Practice…

Keeping Degrees of Transparency in Mind
Effective Targeted Practice

- Graduated and systematic
  - Keep your eye on the ball
- Repetition and rehearsal
  - Mastery builds confidence
- Degrees of transparency
  - Individualize approach
- Set up for success
  - Graduate to more challenging, but pacing is crucial
- Fun and reinforcing
  - Maintain engagement and motivation
Portable Practice Kit

• Must HAVEs:
  ▪ Fluency and familiarity with CDI and VDI skills
  ▪ Creativity
  ▪ Intentional plan with backup plan
  ▪ Spontaneity (but NOT spontaneous practice)

• Optional:
  ▪ Wipe board or paper
  ▪ Reinforcement board
  ▪ Familiar games or activities
  ▪ Prizes
Taking it on the Road…

• Flip cards with favorites
• Brave Bingo
• I Spy
• Scavenger Hunt
Daily Homework

• Attend to the cycle: awareness is crucial first step
• Monitor your use of questions or prompts to verbalize
• Practice CDI and CDI/VDI 5 minutes daily to gain mastery and to acclimate
  ▪ Needs to become fluid, like a second language
• Refer to the ‘talking map’ and establish the first target
• Select planned and intentional situations to begin using the skills daily to build brave muscles
  ▪ 2-3x a day
Helpful Resources

• www.childmind.org

• www.selectivemutism.org

• www.pcit.org

• www.selectivemutismlearning.org
Coexisting Disorders in Children With Selective Mutism: How to Differentiate Symptoms and Navigate Behaviors

Wednesday, March 16, 2016
Time: 06:15 PM — 07:30 PM

Child Mind Institute
445 Park Avenue (with entrance on 56th Street)
New York, NY 10022
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