

Episode 18 – Selective Mutism H.E.L.P. Free Online Summits

Hello and welcome to the Selective Mutism HELP, Home Educational Learning Program, Podcast, my name is Kelly, and I will be your host. This podcast aims to give you the help you need to support the person in your life affected by Selective Mutism. In this episode I'll be talking about past online Summits that Selective Mutism H.E.L.P. has hosted and share exciting information about the next free summit coming up in May 2022. Let's get started.

Welcome to episode 18 of the Selective Mutism HELP Home Educational Learning Program podcast. My name is Kelly, and I am a parent of a child with Selective Mutism. Being that I am a parent and not a medical professional, this podcast is for informational purposes only. Plus, being that I'm a parent and not a medical professional, I am always looking to hear from professionals on how to help my child. During the start of our journey it was hard to find support from professionals and from those going through the same experiences. I realized pretty early on just how few resources there are to learn about this diagnosis. Once I began finding people near me going through the same things and having the same questions, it dawned on me that a resource needed to be created. That is how Selective Mutism H.E.L.P. came to be. In addition to this podcast, I also host free online summits twice a year. I am currently in the process of getting ready to release my 4th free online summit, which I'll talk more about in a little bit. For those of you who don't know what an online summit is, let me tell you how it works.

Think of an online summit as a conference in the comfort of your own home. You don't have to worry about flights, hotels, being around a bunch of people you don't know, or sticking to a schedule. You are at home and are free to listen to discussions about topics you are interested in at your convenience. The Selective Mutism H.E.L.P. online summits are all about topics that pertain to Selective Mutism. As far as I know, this is the only summit of its kind. The first summit was in October 2020. This Summit was three days long and consisted of ten different interviews – three each day. The interviews in the first day consisted of me interviewing Dr. Aimee Kortba from Thriving Minds to discuss what SM is. This was a great way to hear about the specifics about SM and to answer the most commonly asked questions about SM. It also consisted of interviews with a dad of a young child with SM and a young adult who had SM herself. Day 2 consisted of interviews that discussed various treatment methods. Dr. Shelley Avny from WeSpeak was interviewed about teens with SM, Lucy Nathanson from Confident Kids was interviewed about various treatment methods for younger kids, and Anna Biavati-Smith was interviewed from WordSteps Speech and Language therapy to discuss how a speech language therapist or pathologist can help a child with SM. The final day, consisted of an interview with Dr. Christopher Kearney from University of Nevada - Las Vegas who discussed different ways research has been done on SM. Plus, day 3 consisted of interviews with professionals that didn't have direct experience with SM, but had experience with some of the other difficulties our SM kids may have. One of which was an entrepreneur who started a business supporting kids with autism by providing sensory tools. He started his company after they struggled finding support for their son with autism. Kelly Mahler who knows all the ins and out of interoception was interviewed. This was a such a great conversation to understand exactly what interoception is and why it's important to know about this to help support our SM kids. And finally, a talk with Sonia Story with Move Play Thrive where we talked about primitive

reflexes and how unintegrated reflexes could hold the key to our children's SM. Fascinating information!

Based off the feedback from the first summit, it appeared there were more topics registrants wanted to learn about, so I decided to release another Summit in the Spring of 2021. This one had a very similar format to the first summit. During Day 1, consisted of an interview with a mom of a child with SM, Gaye James, who also wrote a great book about her experience. Jaime Lago is a professional choreographer and now children's book author who had SM as a child and teen and she shared her experiences growing up with SM. And on Day 1, I also spoke about our experiences with various exposures that helped give our daughter opportunities to practice being brave. Day two was full of fantastic professionals who also had children with SM so they truly understood the difficulties that many of us have gone through or are currently going through. The professionals were Ruth Perednik with the Selective Mutism Treatment Center who talked about the village that every SM child needs to give the best chance of overcoming their SM. Joleen Fernald, a speech language pathologist, talked about the inside out and bottom up approach to helping a child with SM, and finally, Claire Carroll gave us some exceptionally useful information about the differences and similarities between SM and Autism and how a child can have both. Day three consisted of learning about how Sound therapy can help support someone with anxiety which Charlotte Davies with Fit 2 Learn discussed. We also learn how to create a sensory space at home for a child that may have sensory issues and how an Occupational Therapist could support an SM Child. This discussion was with a pair of entrepreneurs who started a company called SENSE-ational Spaces. The final talk from the Spring 2021 summit was with Danielle Cottam, a senior speech pathologist, who talked about how various people in an SM child's life can help them lower their anxiety to give them a better opportunity to communicate. It was a group of amazing women who were so passionate about what they do, it was an honor to learn from them!

The feedback I got after that summit was a little different than the first summit. It was different because many people had questions about teens and adults with SM. As some of you may be aware, there really isn't a whole lot of information about teens and young adults with SM. I felt for these parents that needed answers on how to help their child now that they were older and still struggling. I knew I had to do a summit about this, no matter how difficult it would be to find resources. I scoured the globe and found some amazing professionals to discuss such an important topic. In addition to professionals, I was privileged enough to talk with two amazing women who have lived with SM and they were willing to share what life was like for them as a teen and adult while navigating this diagnosis. Antje Bothin and Erin Glow were interviewed in Day one and gave us some great insight and tips to keep moving forward. Since Shelley Avny did such a great job during the first summit about discussing teens with SM, I knew I needed her back again. On day 2 she spoke about common challenges teens with SM face. Also in Day 2, I had the absolute greatest pleasure to interview Maggie Johnson. If you've done any research on SM, I'm sure you have come across her name. She has been instrumental in helping us understand SM and she and invaluable information about how to support a teen with SM. She mainly focused on the sliding-in technique, but the amount of practical advise she gave was invaluable! The third day of the summit consisted of talking with Anna Biavati-Smith again, but this time it was helping us understand what to focus on when treating a teen or young adult with SM. She has such a fun personality and great tips for helping a difficult age group. Johanna

Syren, a mom of twin boys with SM and now an advocate from Sweden, discussed the importance of extracurricular activities for teens with SM. And Susannah Thomson an SM specialist in Bristol talked about teaching the brain to be comfortable being uncomfortable. She gave some solid advice on how to break down exposures based on how the individual perceives its difficulty level. The Spring 2021 Summit was absolutely amazing and it was more than I could have ever imagined!

Some may follow the mantra "Quit while you're ahead," but not me, I knew I needed to keep going and keep providing valuable information to those that need it. I'm excited to announce the fourth Selective Mutism H.E.L.P. Summit is set to be released May 20-24th. The previous Summits have been four days, but this one is going to be 5 days because of the amazing support I've received from so many professionals wanting to share information about SM. This summit is going to be about interviewing different professionals and how they treat someone with selective mutism. I will be talking with speech language pathologists, social worker, behavior analyst, chiropractors, psychologists and many more. I wanted to give parents an opportunity to learn from different professionals so that they have choices when it comes to treating their child and I also wanted it to be for professionals to know that they may have the tools already in their toolbox to help a child with Selective Mutism. We all know we could definitely use more professionals treating those with Selective mutism!

So how can you register for the next free online summit? All you need to do is go to www.smhelp.org to register.. During each day of the summit you will receive an email with a link and password to access that day's videos. Each day there will be three videos available to watch and you will have 24 hours to watch those videos starting at midnight Eastern Time. Once the 24 hours is up those days videos go away and you will receive a new link and password that will give you access to new videos for another 24 hour period. There will be four days with three videos each day and on the 5th day all 12 videos will be available to watch for a final 24 hour period. If you are unavailable that weekend don't worry you can still have up to a week longer to watch all 12 videos from the summit. New this year for a small fee you will be able to get an extra week access to all the videos. If you're unavailable for that week don't worry there is still an option for you to watch the videos as the videos will be available to purchase for lifetime access. Lifetime access will give you the opportunity to create a username and password for the SM help website to gain access to all the videos anytime you need them.

If this is your first time hearing about the summits and you want to learn more about past summits go to www.smhelp.org/free-summit and you'll be able to see information from the past summits as well as find information on how to purchase lifetime access. To show my appreciation for all of the podcast listeners out there I'm offering 25% off lifetime access to all past summits including the fall 2020 spring 2021 and fall 2021 summits. Use the coupon code `podcast18` all lowercase letters with the number 18 at the end to save 25%. I hope you can join me for the spring 2022 selective mutism help online summit. Don't forget to register by going to www.smhelp.org. Take care!