Sliding-in Technique Procedure

Overview

'Sliding in' is a technique that is used to support a pupil to talk in front of new people. It may be initially used to help a pupil move on from speaking only to a trusted communication partner to speaking to a key worker. In these steps the trusted communication partner is referred to as the parent/carer.

The Sliding-in process helps the pupil make small steps to reduce their anxiety about speaking. The starting point and pace that the pupil goes through the steps will vary. More anxious pupils may require steps to be broken down into smaller steps. The steps included in this leaflet are guidelines only and the procedure can be adapted to suit an individual pupil's needs.

This technique requires that a key adult works with the pupil for short regular periods through the week. This person becomes the 'key worker'. Before embarking on the sliding-in technique it is important for the keyworker to establish rapport with the child and a mutual understanding of selective mutism.

Agree a time limit for each session (10-15 mins). It is important to explain each step to the pupil, and make it clear that you will only continue for as long as they feel comfortable. Write each target down on a record sheet as you go along, and as each is achieved, invite pupil to tick it off, add a sticker, or record their anxiety level, depending on their age.

If target proves too difficult (e.g. child can only whisper when keyworker enters the room) either:

i) acknowledge that the step was too difficult and immediately make it easier, or

ii) stop early, showing the child how well they have done and explaining that you will try again next time. Do NOT fill the remainder of the session with an enjoyable non-verbal activity!

Start each session with a warm-up by repeating the last two activities from the previous session (and issuing more stickers!). Then go forward, if necessary breaking a previously failed target into smaller steps to ensure success. Do NOT keep repeating safe activities – unless they are with different people or in a different place.

On average you move through the steps over a period of a few weeks.

Jo Clark, Kent Community Health NHS Trust

Sliding-in Technique Procedure – Step by Step – Keyworker Record

Step Description	Completed
Pupil and parent/carer in a quiet room engaged in a motivating activity that involves speech.	
Pupil and parent/carer change the speaking activity to an undemanding activity such as rote talking (e.g. counting to 10 together, saying the alphabet/days of the week/months of the year.) knowing that keyworker is outside the room, a short distance away. Keyworker waits for 5 minutes then returns.	
Pupil and parent/carer repeat a rote talking activity (e.g. pupil and parent/carer count to 20/finish the days of the week/get half way through the alphabet.). Key worker waits nearby, e.g. down the corridor. Parent/carer or child lets key worker know when they have finished, e.g. by opening the door. Key worker returns to congratulate child, check off target and set a new target.	
Pupil and parent/carer repeat rote talking as above. Key worker is outside the closed door and re-enters room at the end of the activity after receiving sign from child or parent/carer.	
Key worker leaves room leaving the door slightly open on their way out. Pupil and parent/carer then do rote talking. Key worker waits until they have finished the activity to re-enter the room.	
The above step is repeated with the door being left slightly wider open each time until the door is open wide enough for someone to enter. It is possible to ask the child how far to leave the door open each time!	
Pupil and parent/carer do rote talking while keyworker stands outside, by the open door. The keyworker joins in the rote talking activity from outside the door, out of sight.	
Pupil and parent/carer do rote talking activity while Key worker joins in from outside the room and halfway through, slowly enters the room, The Key worker waits just inside the open door and continues to join in until the activity is completed.	
Repeat the above but this time the Key worker walks half way to the table after entering the room. The Key worker continues to join in the rote talking activity until the activity is completed.	
Repeat the above but this time the Key worker walks all the way into the room and sits down with child and parent/carer at the table as the rote talking activity comes to a close.	
Have a complete round of rote-talking at the table and then reverse the order. e.g. i) Days of the week starting with keyworker and followed by parent/carer; ii) Days of the week starting with keyworker and followed by child	
Pupil, parent/carer and Key worker will all take turns at game or counting (pupil can decide how much each person should count).	
Pupil, parent/carer and keyworker move on to activities that progress from low to a high communication load. Activities can be changed to make more verbal demands on the pupil, e.g. from rote counting/days of the week to completing sentences with 1 word to games involving a sentence, e.g. "I went to market…", "Have you got any sevens?" Keep all activities as short as possible and progress to a higher level as soon as the pupil seems confident with an activity.	
Once the pupil is comfortable speaking with the keyworker, activities are repeated with the key worker only while parent/carer waits across the room and then outside the room. The pupil is then asked to get the parent/carer at the end of the activity.	

Reference: **'The Selective Mutism Resource Manual'** by Maggie Johnson and Alison Wintgens, Speechmark Publishing.

Next Steps – Generalising Speech Across People and Settings

Once the pupil is comfortable speaking with their Key Worker in a variety of different speaking activities they are ready to begin making steps to generalise their speech across different people and environments. Meet 2 or 3 times a week initially but can reduce to once a week once transition to class is underway.

Generalisation of Speech - Step by Step Guide

Sliding in new peers and members of staff.
The Key Worker and pupil complete speaking activities (initially using activities with a low communication load) and use the Sliding In Technique to add additional staff/peers to the activities. Slowly build up to games/activities in small groups & vary the groups so not always the same children.
Slide in the pupil's teacher. Once the pupil is comfortable talking in a structured activity with the teacher work towards sliding the TA out of the activity.
Use the 'Talking Circle' technique to slide in more than one person at a time once the pupil has had several successes with sliding in new peers/adults.
Complete a group activity including the teacher and other pupils. This ensures that other peers have heard the pupil talk to the teacher. Reading activities are ideal for competent readers.
Transition to different environments
Move activities to different environments, working from the most private (and unlikely to be overheard) to more open environments with the possibility of other people walking past in earshot. These different environments should include the pupil's classroom without the rest of the class there (e.g. at lunch or break time). Work towards sessions in the dining room, corridor, playground etc.
Ensure that when completing the activities in new environments, the group contains peers that the pupil has already spoken in front of comfortably on a previous occasion. This helps to reduce the pupil's anxiety by ensuring that only one aspect is changed at a time (e.g. either a new person OR a new environment/risk of being overheard).
Transition to the classroom
Before speaking in the classroom with the whole class present, at least half the class need to have heard the pupil's voice already. This can be through the sliding in activities in small groups, or by playing a voice recording during circle time or general class activities. The pupil should already have been reassured that they won't be picked to answer a question or read aloud in front of the class *unless they volunteer*.
While the rest of the class is busy begin to work on activities 1, 2 and 3 below. Consider the Pupil's positioning for these activities, as the Pupil will not want the rest of the class to see their lips moving.
1) Completing Talking Partner activities with peers the Pupil can already talk to.
2) Pupil talking to the class TA at their own table.
3) Pupil talking/reading to the teacher either at their own table or the teacher's desk.
As the pupil gains confidence, the TA practices class activities in advance with the pupil so that they have the option to put their hand up or take their turn when they already know the answer (e.g. one pupil practiced single sounds so that in literacy hour he was ready to say 's' when shown the letter 's'.)
Further Transition Ideas
Split the class into small groups and put the pupil in a group with other peers they've already spoken to. Allow the group to leave the class room to complete a task (e.g. go to playground to collect leaves and name as many different trees as possible).
Seat the pupil in the dining room with peers they've already spoken to.
Ask the pupil to show a new or younger pupil around the school.
Leave verbal Circle Time contributions and answering the Register until last!

These steps can be covered in tandem

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