

Stuttering and selective mutism: causes and impacts



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According to the World Health Organization (WHO), approximately 300 million people in the world have some form of anxiety disorder. Being anxious is experiencing a feeling of worry, nervousness, or uneasiness. Most people experience anxiety and whether it is sometimes or always, all situations involve other people. In most social settings, having an anxiety disorder can be a stressful thing to go through. It can cause speech issues or physical reactions. On rare occasions, anxiety can specifically cause obstacles such as stuttering and selective mutism in any setting or situation.

What exactly is stuttering? Stuttering is to talk with an involuntary repetition of sounds. Those who stutter know what they want to say and how they want to say it but experience difficulties producing a normal flow of speech.

Stuttering can also be accompanied by struggle behaviors such as rapid blinking, twitching, or the repetition of an action. Stuttering can be caused by many factors. It can be hereditary, due to development, brain trauma, or emotionally traumatic events.

The three types of stuttering are developmental, neurogenic, and psychogenic. “ Developmental stuttering is common among young children and occurs as their language and speech develop. Neurogenic stuttering may occur after a stroke or something that can cause trauma or injury to the brain and nervous system. Psychogenic stuttering is stuttering that occurs after a traumatic event. Before people thought that all stuttering was psychogenic but through recent studies, it has been proved that there is more than one type of stuttering, and psychogenic stuttering is relatively rare” (*NIDCD*). For treatment, there is not much that can be done but the little options that are available have been proven to be mostly successful.

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Speech therapy and electronic devices are the more widely accepted means used to treat stuttering (*Healthline*). Speech therapy involves observing the person who stutters, the way their mouth moves when they speak, and finding specific exercises to fix the speech issues. Electronic devices can also be placed into the ear and either delay or alter the sound of one's voice, create an echo, or play some sort of noise.

Selective mutism is an anxiety disorder in which a person cannot speak in specific situations, to specific people, or in specific settings. It usually coexists with shyness or social anxiety. Selective mutism can be caused by a child being very shy, having an additional anxiety disorder, or being afraid. The specific cause(s) of selective mutism haven't been determined yet but it can be experienced under extreme anxiety. Being diagnosed with selective mutism relies heavily on the accounts of others since it would most likely be difficult to get the person being diagnosed to speak (*ASHA*). These people may be able to talk endlessly with people they feel comfortable and it may not always be their family or friends. Treatment options include pharmacological and behavioral methods. Behavioral treatments mostly consist of exposure therapy. Pharmacological treatments are as expected, prescription medications.

Stuttering can affect people of all ages and selective mutism is more common in young children. About 3 million Americans stutter and less than 3 million, which is less than 1%, Americans are affected by selective mutism. Neither one of those disorders is specific to one race or group of people. Those who suffer from either one often feel stressed, embarrassed, and even

be led to depression. Not being able to communicate with ease or fluently like others can impact their health, social life, and personal life.

It frustrates them that they can't speak like they want to. People with selective mutism may want to shout and scream until their throats hurt but because they feel anxious about what will happen after or as they speak they can't let out even a single noise. Stutterers are often bullied, teased, and denied jobs. Being seen as unprofessional because of something they can't control makes people more self-conscious. These and multiple other reasons can cause some sufferers to avoid situations where there is even a slight chance they will be required to speak. It can also cause them to resent their disorders or themselves (Cummings 482). Those with selective mutism have family members that have never heard their voice. People that haven't been diagnosed live their whole lives without knowing there are pharmacological and behavioral treatment options available to them. While some are not aware of the possible solutions, others would like to receive treatment but can't either because they can't afford it or can't afford to travel to where the treatments are available.

From 14 to 23, Carl Sutton was suffering from selective mutism. His grandparents never had the chance to hear his voice. " Children and adults with selective mutism tend to live double lives, hiding their ability to speak in certain situations, and desperately trying to conceal their mutism in others. In the early teenage years, selective mutism is very often compounded by a social anxiety disorder. By young adulthood, or earlier, many people with selective mutism will also experience depression and other anxiety disorders, including agoraphobia" (*Rethink Mental Illness*). Agoraphobia is <https://assignbuster.com/stuttering-and-selective-mutism-causes-and-impacts/>

the fear of places and situations that might cause panic, helplessness, or embarrassment. This is common in people with speech disorders of any kind. “ Imagine dealing with anxiety so powerful it doesn’t allow you to talk, and constantly being told you are rude . . . People with selective mutism suffer because of a condition they never wanted or would want. They are judged as difficult, uncooperative, rude, and stuck up people and are also often judged as choosing not to speak when the fact is that they can’t.” (*Rethink Mental Illness*).

In conclusion, Anxiety disorders have been becoming more common in recent years. Among these disorders are selective mutism and stuttering. Those who experience these disorders often avoid social interaction and instances where they will be required to speak. Selective mutism and stuttering are both involuntary speech issues that can be caused by extreme anxiety or nervousness. The fear of not being able to speak fluently can make sufferers more nervous about their condition and more likely to experience it.

Works Cited

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