



Social Anxiety

Practical self help you can start today

Social anxiety is not shyness. It is a strong fear of being judged, embarrassed or rejected, often with blushing, shaking, sweating or a racing heart. The good news: it is very treatable. These steps come from CBT, an evidence based approach.

THE LOOP THAT KEEPS IT GOING. BREAK ANY LINK.

Negative thought

"They will think I am stupid."

>

Self focus

Watching how you look and sound.

>

Safety behaviours

Avoiding eyes, phone, over rehearsing.

>

Relief now, fear later

Your brain learns it was dangerous.

1

Build a fear ladder

List situations that scare you, score each 0 to 10, start at the easiest. Stay until anxiety dips a little, repeat, then climb one rung. Say hi, ask one question, sit with others for 10 minutes, then lunch with a small group.

2

Look outward

Anxiety pulls attention inward. In a conversation, listen to their words, notice their expression, and silently pick three details about them or the room. Practice this daily.

3

Check the thought

Ask: what is the evidence? What is a more balanced version? Will this matter in a month? Keep one line on your phone: "Most people are busy thinking about themselves."

4

Drop one safety behaviour

Phone in your pocket for the first 15 minutes. Eye contact with 2 or 3 people. One extra sentence when you speak. Prepare 2 conversation starters, but do not script everything.

5

Slow the body down

Hand on belly. Breathe in through the nose for 4, hold 2, out slowly for 4 to 6. Do it for 1 to 3 minutes before or during. A short walk before you go helps too.

6

After the event

No detailed post mortem for 24 hours. If you reflect, write only one thing that went okay and one thing to try next time. Skip global verdicts like "I always mess up."

Quick reminder card

- Breathe: in 4, hold 2, out 4 to 6.
- Focus outward on the person and the room.
- One balanced thought before you walk in.
- Drop one safety behaviour today.
- One small step up your ladder.

When to get extra help

Talk to a clinician if you avoid important parts of work, study or relationships, if anxiety brings low mood or heavy distress, or if these steps feel too hard to do alone. CBT, guided self help and, for some people, medication alongside therapy all work well. Asking for help early speeds things up.