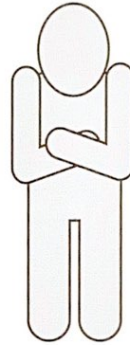


# Social Anxiety

Many people are shy—it's just a part of who they are. People who are shy often feel uncomfortable in social situations and are less likely to speak up.

Some people, however, are more than shy. They have social anxiety. These people find social situations very difficult, and they often have an intense fear of being ridiculed, judged, or rejected. Those with social anxiety may experience symptoms such as sweating, nausea, or feelings of panic in social situations.



## Social Anxiety Survey

*How many of the following questions will you answer yes?*

**Yes No**

1. Do you often have a hard time talking to other people, even people you know?
2. Are you afraid to speak in front of people?
3. Do you have a difficult time saying no?
4. Do you experience physical symptoms like blushing, shaking, or dizziness in social situations?
5. Do you frequently leave social events early or avoid them all together?
6. Do you try not to make eye contact with others?
7. Do you worry about being judged or made fun of in social situations?

If you feel like you have social anxiety, or you're just very shy, read on for tips to help you feel more comfortable and confident in social situations.

# Overcoming Shyness and Social Anxiety

**Plan for success.** If you're feeling anxious about an upcoming social situation or event, think about what you can do to make it go well. Imagine what you might talk about, and think of questions you can ask others. Don't think about what could go wrong—visualize everything going well.

**Have confident body language.** Stand tall with your shoulders back and walk with confidence. If you act confident, you just might find that you feel more confident.

**Focus on others.** People appreciate it when someone shows an interest in them. When talking with others, make eye contact, smile, and be genuinely interested in what they are saying.

**Practice making small talk.** Before class, at lunch, or when paying for an item at a store—make it a point to ask a question or to start a conversation.

**Be smart.** Using alcohol or drugs to cope with the fear of social situations is never a good idea. Focus on developing healthy coping strategies.

**Practice mindfulness.** Whenever you're in a social situation, remind yourself to be "in the now" and to be fully present.

**Seek professional help.** Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness.

## A word on panic attacks

A panic attack is a sudden feeling of severe fear and distress. Individuals suffering from a panic attack may feel chest pains, nausea, sweating, and shaking. Panic attacks can feel like something is seriously physically wrong. *If you experience a panic attack, take deep breaths and get to a safe place until it passes.*