

Social Anxiety Disorder (or Social Phobia)

What is Social Anxiety Disorder?

Social Anxiety Disorder is a condition in which the sufferer experiences intense fear and anxiety in one or more types of social situations. The person feels embarrassed, ill at ease, and fearful of being humiliated or judged negatively by others. A consequence is often the avoidance of social situations, compromising ordinary life interactions. Lack of social contact leads to poor social skills and the absence of opportunities for intimacy and closeness with others, making the condition worse.

While Social Anxiety Disorder may seem similar to shyness, it is much more severe than ordinary shyness. It can be experienced in only one type of social situation, such as public speaking, or it can be more generalised and experienced in all or most social situations.

Most cases begin early in life and continue into adulthood unless treated and overcome. Secondary conditions can result, such as depression and loneliness. In an effort to overcome these unhappy feelings, the person may turn to drugs, overeating or other addictions or disorders.

Causes of Social Anxiety Disorder

- ◆ Behaviour copied from close family members
- ◆ Bullying
- ◆ Neglect
- ◆ Vulnerability from inherited personality traits
- ◆ Humiliating or traumatic events that have not been properly addressed
- ◆ Inadequate opportunities for positive social interactions
- ◆ Lack of praise and encouragement to develop a positive, strong self-concept
- ◆ Negative or over-criticism from parents or other close others early in life

Symptoms of Social Anxiety Disorder

- ◆ Blushing
- ◆ Choking feeling
- ◆ Difficulty speaking
- ◆ Feeling sick
- ◆ Panic attack
- ◆ Rapid heart-beat
- ◆ Stammering
- ◆ Tears

Sufferers may overthink or avoid situations. They may ruminate excessively after situations they didn't manage to avoid. They are inclined to be overly self-conscious and self-referential about incidents, sensitive to criticism and hypervigilant. Self-esteem and self-confidence are probably low.

Treatment for Social Anxiety Disorder

Respect, compassion and insights of Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) help overcome this disorder. The cognitive aspect of CBT prompts sufferers to examine the beliefs and thoughts that contribute to their condition. They will be prompted to replace negative self-beliefs with more positive, realistic ones, opening the way for cognitive change and a more positive approach to life issues.

The behavioural component of CBT assists sufferers to change their way of reacting to situations where symptoms could occur. Gradual exposure to social and other fear-producing situations brings confidence from real-life events. Nothing bad happens, the sky doesn't fall in and they don't die.

Beneficial are self-calming techniques, relaxation, meditation and soothing breathing practices. These can be learned and practiced ahead of time, and also when fear-producing events occur. To know more or seek help, contact us below and begin to make life better today.

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