

# Social Anxiety

## What is Social Anxiety?

- Social Anxiety occurs when we feel uncertain or threatened by everyday interactions with family, friends or strangers.
- Our anxiety changes how we think and respond to the social interaction. Often we worry about the interaction for hours before and after it has happened.
- This anxiety releases adrenaline as part of the body's natural response to danger. This means we might show physical signs of sweating or breathlessness or blushing as a result of the extra energy created in this process. We may become fearful that others will notice these changes and will judge us negatively for it.

## How does it change my thoughts?

- “Something bad will happen”
- “I'll embarrass myself”
- “Something is wrong with me”
- “People are watching me”
- “They are judging me”
- “They don't like me”
- “They'll think I'm weird”
- “I should have done it differently”.

## How does it change what I do?

- You may stop going to social situations for fear that something might go wrong.
- You may stop going into busy or crowded places because they don't feel safe or you fear that you will be unable to escape.
- You may find it difficult to relax and start relying on other people, objects or activities to help you feel better.

## What can I do to help me feel better?

- Relaxation techniques including breathing exercises/muscle relaxation.
- Stop focusing on your own thoughts and feelings and instead focus on what and who is around you.
- Try not to avoid social situations – perhaps start with a small gathering to help build up your confidence.
- Consider the possibility that your anxious thoughts might not be true – is there another way to view the situation?

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