FROM SOCIAL ANXIETY TO

SOCIAL BUTTERFLY

IN 90 DAYS



Bifrost
Life Balance Through Initiative

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction **5**

Symptoms of Social Anxiety **7**

Causes of Social Anxiety **9**

How to Lessen Social Anxiety **11**

Building Social Confidence and Self-Esteem **19**

How to Build an Exciting Social Life **23**

How to Make Friends **27**

Conclusion **30**

INTRODUCTION

Of all the phobias, it's possible that social anxiety is the most common. ***Social anxiety is the fear or apprehension that you'll be judged negatively by others in a social situation.*** Social anxiety might seem harmless, but it can have a profound effect on many parts of your life.

Social anxiety can have a negative impact on your:

- Career
- Social life
- Education
- Intimate relationships

Severe social anxiety may require professional assistance, but there are many things you can do to help yourself. ***You learned to be fearful in social situations. You can also teach yourself to be more comfortable in social settings.*** Plus, with an effective plan, you can erase years of social anxiety in 90 days.

If you're currently experiencing social anxiety and lack the social life you desire, you have everything necessary within you to enhance your social life and sense of well being.

"People tend to dwell more on negative things than on good things. So the mind then becomes obsessed with negative things, with judgments, guilt and anxiety produced by thoughts about the future and so on."

- Eckhart Tolle

SYMPTOMS OF SOCIAL ANXIETY

How social anxiety is experienced can vary from person to person. The differences between individuals can be quite striking. ***The only common experience is one of discomfort.*** How does social anxiety feel to you?

There are many common physical symptoms, including:

- Nausea
- Trembling
- Rapid heart beat
- Dizziness
- Sweating

However, the symptoms aren't just physical. There can be psychological symptoms, too:

- Anticipatory anxiety regarding social situations that can occur weeks before the event

- Skipping work or school
- Avoidance of social situations
- Worry of embarrassing yourself in front of others

You don't have to let these symptoms affect you negatively! Choose to accept your discomfort and deal with it. There are several strategies coming up.

"I think we all have blocks between us and the best version of ourselves, whether it's shyness, insecurity, anxiety, whether it's a physical block, and the story of a person overcoming that block to their best self. It's truly inspiring because I think all of us are engaged in that every day."

- Tom Hooper

CAUSES OF SOCIAL ANXIETY

Social anxiety often starts at a young age and is believed to have both genetic and environmental components. Some people are more likely to feel anxious than others, but we all have the potential to be more confident and comfortable.

A few suspected environmental causes include:

- Family dynamics
- Bullying at school
- Abuse
- Negative social experiences
- Incorrect assessments

It's possible that the causes don't even matter.

Some of us have brains that learn quite quickly. ***One negative experience can result in avoiding that same experience in the future.*** Being intelligent isn't always an advantage. Consider if you made any hasty judgments in your youth.

Consider your past. Can you see any negative experiences from your childhood that affect your ability to comfortably relate to others? Luckily, you're all grown up now and can make your own choices. These experiences no longer have to affect your behavior and feelings.

"Anxiety does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, but only empties today of its strength."

- Charles Spurgeon

HOW TO LESSEN SOCIAL ANXIETY

If social anxiety is largely a learned behavior, it only makes sense that you can learn a new way of reacting to situations that currently cause fear and anxiousness. ***There are several strategies that can lessen or eliminate social anxiety.*** A little bravery is all that's required.

Try these techniques to minimize your social anxiety:

1. **Be logical.** Looking into the future and expecting the worst is the cause of anxiety. You must be expecting something bad to happen. Otherwise, how could you feel bad about something that hasn't happened yet? Ask yourself:

    ➡ What is the worst outcome that is likely to happen? The key word is "likely."

    ➡ What impact would that truly have on me?

    ➡ Do I have a reason to be anxious?

- ➡ Are all of these people really interested in my life, or are they more likely to be concerned with their own lives and issues?

- ➡ What am I actually risking by attending the event?

- ➡ What will my life look like in 10 years if I don't enhance my social life and my ability to deal with others?

2. **Be mindful.** Mindfulness is all the rage these days. But what is mindfulness? ***Mindfulness is paying attention to the present while being accepting of your thoughts and feelings.*** Notice how clever this is. If you're only thinking about the present, the future is absent from your mind. It's not possible to worry about something you're not thinking about.

   - ➡ Your life is happening this second. ***You can only live your life in the present moment.*** All the time spent worrying is lost.

   - ➡ Mindfulness can be used during socially stressful situations, too. When you're feeling stressed, acknowledge the sensations you're feeling in your body. "Isn't that interesting? My heart sure is beating quickly."

- ➡ Stay focused on your environment and your current activity. If you're talking to someone, focus on their words and their face. By focusing on your environment, you can stay out of your mind. ***Mindfulness requires practice, but it can enhance every aspect of your life.***

3. **Breathe.** It's questionable whether anyone can learn to control their heart rate, blood pressure, or tendency to sweat. However, you can certainly control your breathing. You can hold your breath, breathe faster or slower, and control the depth of your breaths.

   - ➡ ***Slow, deep breaths are effective at lessening the physical symptoms of anxiety.*** When you're feeling stressed, take deeper, slower breaths and see what happens.

   - ➡ If you have a little privacy, try incorporating relaxation techniques with your breathing. Close your eyes. While taking deep, slow breaths, flex and relax each muscle in your body. Start at your toes and move all the way up to your face.

Use these strategies each day. Soon, you'll turn them into habits that will lessen the amount of generalized anxiety you feel.

But these techniques may not be enough to lessen your anxiety in specific situations. It's a lot like golf. Being great at putting doesn't necessarily translate to being a great with your driver. ***However, lessening your overall anxiety provides the mental space needed to attack the individual parts of your social life.***

"Practically everybody knows what it's like to feel anxious, worried, nervous, afraid, uptight, or panicky. Often, anxiety is just a nuisance, but sometimes it can cripple you and prevent you from doing what you really want with your life. But I have some great news for you: You can change the way you feel."

- David D. Burns

It's unlikely that anyone can eliminate all fear associated with an activity or situation without facing that situation directly. That means you're going to have to make yourself uncomfortable to see improvement.

Fortunately, you can minimize the discomfort. Baby steps are the key.

Expose yourself to the situations you fear:

1. **Create reasonable social goals.** Reasonable is a function of your starting point. If you can't talk to a woman without feeling as if you're about to have a coronary, a goal of dating a supermodel in the next 90 days is probably too aggressive at this time.

    ➡ ***Set a few reasonable goals that focus on improvement, rather than perfection.*** Walking up to a stranger and asking for directions comfortably could be a reasonable goal for some.

2. **Create a hierarchy of tasks based upon the stressfulness of the situation.** Let's stick with the goal of asking a stranger for directions.

    ➡ Consider the steps you could take to achieve this goal with a minimal amount of stress:

    ✓ **Step 1.** Walk around the mall and make eye contact with 100 people as you pass them. Maintain your mindfulness and your deep slow breathing.

- ✓ **Step 2.** Walk around the mall, make eye contact, and smile directly at 100 people.

- ✓ **Step 3.** Do the same as step two, but also say, "Hi" to each person. If you do this to 100 people, you can be certain that at least one person will engage you in a conversation. Do your best.

- ✓ **Step 4.** Do step three, but also ask where Sears is located.

- ✓ There can be many more steps involved. If you're anxious about using the phone, the first step might be to look at the phone for 2 minutes. The next step might be to hold the phone in your hand.

➡ ***How quickly you move to the next step is up to you.*** If you wait until you're 100% comfortable, it will take a long time to be successful. If you rush, you're going to be miserable and will quit before you're successful.

➡ Monitor your feelings of anxiety and move forward accordingly.

- ➡ Keep attacking additional goals until you're able to stay comfortable in all situations that are meaningful to you.

3. **Keep records.** You can call it a journal or a diary, but keep records of your anxiety as you work toward your goals. The easiest way is to assign a value of 1 to 10, with 10 being highly stressful.

   - ➡ Avoid being upset because your anxiety level is still a 7 after a month of work. Instead, be excited that it's now a 7 instead of the 9 you experienced at the beginning.

   - ➡ You'll quickly learn when you can move on to the next step in your anxiety hierarchy.

4. **Avoid worrying about the things you can't control.** There are many things you can't control. Why worry about:

   - ➡ Sweating

   - ➡ The mood of others

   - ➡ The fact that you think your ears are too big

You have the ability to change your reaction to stressful social situations by slowly increasing your exposure to them. ***Start small and be patient.*** You'll be surprised where you end up in just 90 days by making small improvements each week.

"Every tomorrow has two handles. We can take hold of it with the handle of anxiety or the handle of faith."

- Henry Ward Beecher

BUILDING SOCIAL CONFIDENCE AND SELF-ESTEEM

Social confidence and self-esteem are at the core of becoming a social butterfly. ***Removing your anxiety creates a neutral condition that will allow you to build your social confidence.*** Building your confidence will also help to lower the social anxiety that still remains.

There are many ways to build your social confidence and self-esteem:

1. **Make a list of your positive qualities.** If you think you don't have any, ask your mom or your best friend. Even the people you don't like have a quality or two that you like. The average stranger would like several things about you.

    ➡ Make a complete list and refer to it whenever you're feeling down about your social skills. ***Remind yourself of how great you are.***

2. **Latch on to your sociable friends.** Which of your friends is most outgoing? Spend time in social situations with that person. You'll feel more comfortable and might even make a friend or two in the process.

3. **Take control of your self-talk.** If you tell yourself 1,000 times each day, "I'm a socially confident person, and others love to spend time with me," you'll start to believe it. ***Just as importantly, you won't have room to say anything negative to yourself.***

4. **Relax.** Take it easy on yourself. If you take any single interaction too seriously, it's likely to turn out poorly. People have busy lives. They're much too preoccupied with themselves to spend a lot of time thinking about you.

5. **Prepare yourself beforehand.** You have a party on Friday night at your boss's house and you must attend. What can you do to prepare yourself?

    ➡ Who else will be there? Out of these people, who can you comfortably speak to?

- ➡ Could you take someone to remove some of the social pressure? We all have a friend that can't seem to stop talking. He might finally be useful.

- ➡ Visualize being socially comfortable and successful at the party.

- ➡ ***Have a list of topics to discuss.*** Maybe Mary has six kids and John loves to fish. You could ask Mary about her large family and share a few fishing stories with John.

6. **Make a list of your successes.** You might not be confident yet about your social skills, but you are confident about other things. Make a list of your successes and the things that fill you with feelings of confidence.

   - ➡ Review the list regularly, and the confidence you feel will leak into other areas of your life.

7. **Smile.** That's easy enough. ***Smiling can enhance your mood and increase your attractiveness to others.***

8. **Have good eye contact and stand up straight.** If you act confident, you'll feel more confident. Many experts believe that your mood follows your

physiology. Standing up tall and maintaining good eye contact with others will instill feelings of confidence.

9. **Celebrate your victories, no matter how small.** If you have to be the most social person in the world to be happy with yourself, there's not much chance you'll ever be happy. Anytime you perform better than you did in the past, take the time to congratulate yourself.

    ➡ Anytime you do something you've avoided in the past, celebrate that, too!

Greater levels of confidence and self-esteem open the door to enhancing your social life. ***You have many qualities and successes that make true confidence possible.*** You've already dealt with much of your anxiety. Build the confidence and self-esteem needed to take the next step.

"Anxiety is love's greatest killer. It makes others feel as you might when a drowning man holds on to you. You want to save him, but you know he will strangle you with his panic."

- Anais Nin

HOW TO BUILD AN EXCITING SOCIAL LIFE

Creating an exciting social life might seem impossible. But you have a couple of huge advantages on your side:

- There are many people in the world.
- Many of those people would like to enhance their social life, too.

You have all the advantages you need. The only missing ingredient is a plan!

Create an exciting social life from scratch with these techniques:

1. **Join a club.** Find a club based on an activity that you enjoy, and you'll probably find people you enjoy too.
    - ➡ Poker, bridge, euchre
    - ➡ Soccer, tennis, badminton, swimming

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- ➡ Chess
- ➡ Join a band
- ➡ Darts
- ➡ Billiards
- ➡ Bowling
- ➡ Church
- ➡ Charity
- ➡ The list is almost endless

2. **Get back in touch with old friends.** Busy lives result in losing track of each other. Reach out to some of the friends you no longer see on a regular basis. At least one of them will be thrilled to hear from you.

    - ➡ Who do you know locally that might like to spend time with you? It can be old friends, cousins, former neighbors, and co-workers. Maybe it's the person that used to cut your grass or clean your pool.

3. **Take part in new activities.** New actions result in meeting new people. Join a gym or a yoga class. Volunteer at a local charity or concert venue.

4. **Avoid the solo activities that you use to avoid leaving home.** This most often includes the television and the internet. ***No one improves their social life by watching TV alone.***

5. **Talk to a new person each day.** There are people all around you. There are people waiting in line near you at the store and sitting next to you while you wait for the bus. Not everyone will become your new best friend, but the odds are on your side that you'll hit it off with someone eventually.

6. **Start a Meetup group.** You can choose the emphasis of your group and get together with like-minded people on a regular basis. ***Make the club about anything you choose.*** Maybe you love wine tasting or AcroYoga. It's up to you.

7. **Throw a party.** If you're not invited to many parties, you're probably not hosting enough parties. You have a friend that's great at hosting parties. Let her help you for your first party or two.

8. **Utilize social media.** It's called "social" for a reason. Reach out to new people and add friends-of-friends to your friend list. Post interesting things and people will pay attention to your posts or tweets. Ask if anyone wants to go the movies on Saturday.

9. **Get out of the house.** The more you go out, the more likely you are to meet people that really resonate with you.

These are just a few of the things you can do to build your social life. For the next 90 days, focus on adding social activities like these into your life.

Social lives are like gardens. ***Your social life needs regular attention, or it will wither and die.*** Be proactive, and your social life will blossom.

"It's sad, actually, because my anxiety keeps me from enjoying things as much as I should at this age."

- Amanda Seyfried

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS

You're no longer anxious. You have confidence. You're doing the necessary things to build your social life. But do you know how to make friends? ***Making friends is a skill that fades away after spending too much time alone.*** Your social calibration gets a little off, and your interactions can be a little odd to others.

Fortunately, making friends is simple skill to master. Your mom and kindergarten taught you nearly everything you need to know!

Use these tips to make more friends than you can handle:

1. **Be nice.** How simple is that? Simply be kind to others. Treating others the way you'd like to be treated is a great first step.

2. **Share an opinion.** Your opinions make you unique and interesting.

3. **Create a life that excites you.** ***When you're excited about your life, others are attracted to you***. What excites you isn't important. The fact that you're excited and willing to discuss it appeals to people.

4. **Be relaxed and confident.** If you're too aggressive or anxious, others can feel uncomfortable. Most people enjoy being around laid-back, confident individuals.

   ➡ Smile

   ➡ Have good posture and non-verbal communication

   ➡ Maintain eye contact

5. **Be trustworthy.** ***Do what you say you're going to do.*** Let people be confident that you can be trusted. Keep your word and behave in a way that fosters trust.

6. **Be sensitive to others.** ***Having social intelligence is largely about recognizing and responding to the emotions of others.***

7. **Avoid being a doormat.** Avoid being so accommodating that others feel comfortable taking advantage of your goodwill. You can't have a friend

that doesn't respect you. Help others, but limit how much damage you're willing to do to your own life.

Put yourself out there and make as many friends as your life can handle. How many friends do you want? Would you rather have a few very close friends, or many casual friends? Maybe having both appeals to you.

"The components of anxiety, stress, fear, and anger do not exist independently of you in the world. They simply do not exist in the physical world, even though we talk about them as if they do."

- Wayne Dyer

CONCLUSION

Social anxiety is common to everyone. ***Even the most confident people feel anxious in certain social situations.*** Social anxiety in all situations, though, can affect other parts of life. It can negatively influence your career, social life, and romantic life.

While social anxiety can be uncomfortable, there are many tools to minimize the discomfort and gain greater confidence.

Creating an exciting social life requires regular work and attention. ***Ignoring your social life is the quickest way to kill it.*** You've been close to many people throughout your life. Begin building your network of friends by reaching out to those people with whom you've lost touch.

Think about what it takes to be a good friend and take action to be that friend.

You can take control of your social life. All that's required is a plan and commitment. For the next 90 days, make it a point each day to get out of the house. ***The best things in life include other people.*** With time and effort, you can have a social life that would make anyone jealous.