

**AURORA**

THE STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH AND  
WELLBEING BODY

# COPING WITH SOCIAL ANXIETY

# WHAT IS SOCIAL ANXIETY?



- Social anxiety disorder may be defined as *an intense, persistent fear of being watched and judged by others. This fear can affect work, school, and your other day-to-day activities.*
- It may even lead to avoidance of anxiety-producing social situations, such as giving a presentation or returning items to a store, or enduring them with intense fear or anxiety. It is not the same as being introverted or shy.
- We'll go through some simple tried and tested words of advice that anyone struggling with social anxiety can incorporate into their lives to mitigate the stress.
- Read more: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/social-anxiety-disorder-more-than-just-shyness/index.shtml> & <https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/social-anxiety-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20353561>

# ONE STEP AT A TIME!



- Make a list of daily and weekly goals for social settings and work your way up, slow and steady.
- Going grocery shopping? Perhaps you can ask an employee to help you find a particular item.
- Maybe raise your hand to answer a question you find easy in class?
- Tell a story to a group of friends as practice for giving presentations to a bigger audience.
- It can even be something as simple as consciously eating in public with a friend or close relative.

Read more here:

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/social-anxiety-disorder.htm>

<https://www.scienceofpeople.com/social-anxiety/>

# DEEP BREATHING

- Start by practicing effective methods to alleviate stress in the comfort of your home.
- Later, begin to utilize them in stressful social situations.
- One such technique is *deep breathing*
  - In a comfortable position, begin by inhaling through your nose
  - Use your belly, instead of tightening your chest muscles
  - Time your inhales and exhales to 3 seconds each
  - Feel your body relax with each breath out
  - Repeat for a couple of minutes

Read more here:

<https://thiswayup.org.au/how-do-you-feel/shy/>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-do-i-practice-deep-breathing-for-anxiety-3024389>





# COUNTER YOUR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS

- It's important to recognize unhealthy thought patterns and replace them with positive ones.
- When looking back at your thoughts about social situations, try to seek alternative, more reasonable explanations.
- Perhaps you thought someone looked tired because you're not fun to hang around with, but what if they genuinely hadn't caught enough sleep the night before?
- It might seem easy to think your boss hates you because you arrived late once, but in reality, everyone gets late at some point and you've actually been on time most of the time.

Read more here: <https://psychcentral.com/lib/challenging-negative-self-talk/>  
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326211#3.-Reframe-your-thoughts>



# TEST OUT YOUR FEARS



- At the end of the day, perhaps the surest way to overcome your fears is to face them.
- Do you find yourself dreading the thought of answering that phone call? Well, answering it is the only way you'll ever find out whether those fears were unwarranted or not. You might even discover that you enjoyed it!
- Make small talk with someone in your class, and you might find that others think of you as an interesting person.
- Take control beforehand and intentionally put yourself in uncomfortable situations to see that the actual consequences are not nearly as horrible as your preconceived notions.
- The goal is that as you start small and make active choices regarding these situations, you'll be more "in control" and break out of the cycle of negative anticipation and avoidance.
- Read more:  
<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326211>



# IT'S OKAY TO SEEK HELP!

- Remember, psychiatry and psychotherapy have come a long way.
- Effective, evidence-based strategies employing psychopharmacotherapy, cognitive behavioural therapy, and other modes of psychotherapy can truly bring a positive change and enable to you live a fulfilling life.
- Do not hesitate to reach out and seek help, and know that we at Aurora are always here for you.



# SOME HELPFUL REFERENCES

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/social-anxiety-disorder-more-than-just-shyness/index.shtml>

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/social-anxiety-disorder/symptoms-causes/syc-20353561>

<https://thiswayup.org.au/how-do-you-feel/shy/>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/social-anxiety-disorder-tips-3024209>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/coping-with-social-anxiety-disorder-3024836>

<https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/326211>

<https://www.beyondblue.org.au/personal-best/pillar/supporting-yourself/four-tips-to-handle-social-anxiety-in-the-moment>

<https://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/tips-for-living-with-social-anxiety>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/social-anxiety-disorder-more-than-just-shyness/index.shtml>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/how-do-i-practice-deep-breathing-for-anxiety-3024389>

<https://www.scienceofpeople.com/social-anxiety/>

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/anxiety/social-anxiety-disorder.htm>

<https://psychcentral.com/lib/challenging-negative-self-talk/>